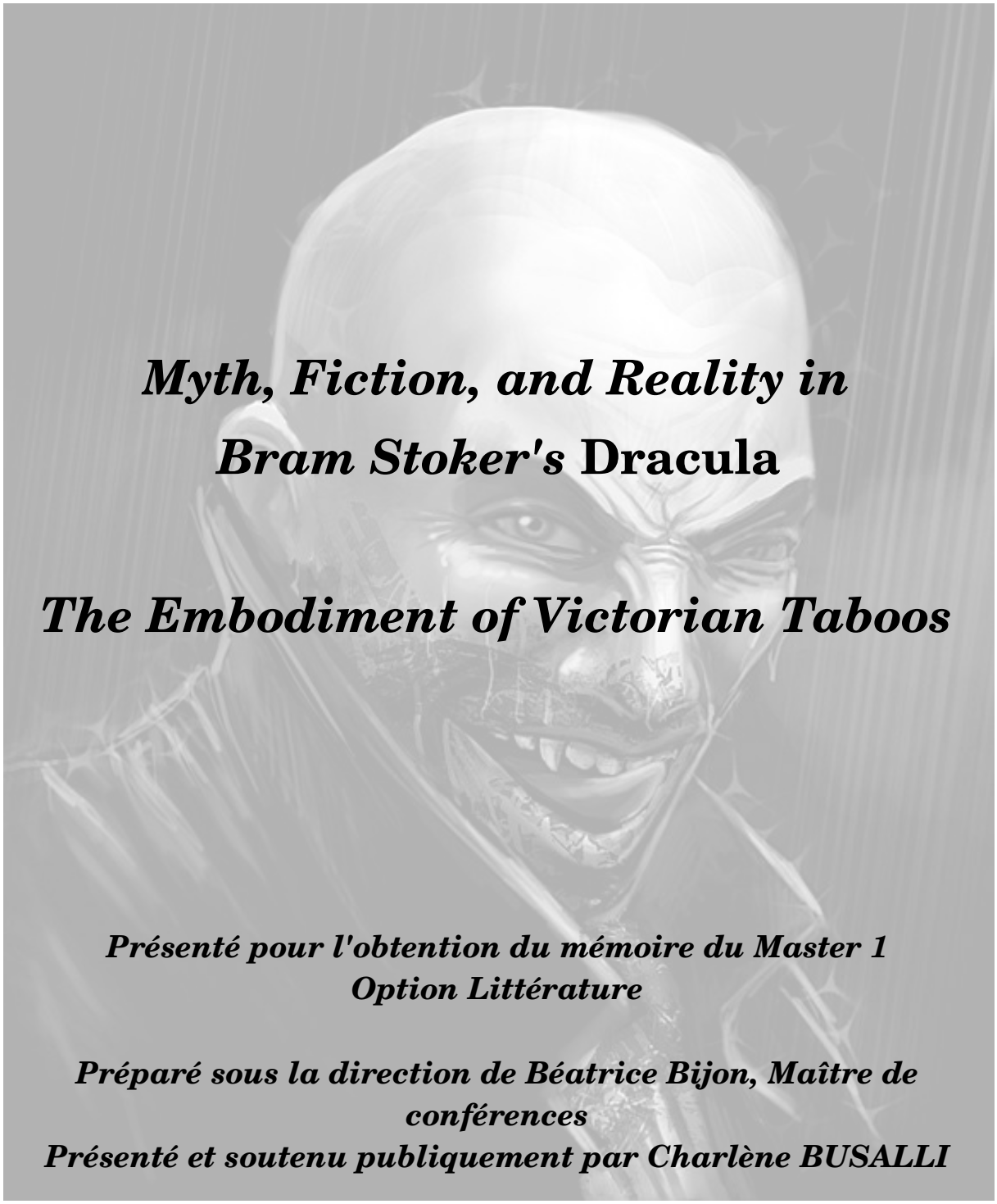
Université Jean Monnet
Faculté Arts Lettres Langues
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Etudes anglophones



Myth, Fiction, and Reality in Bram Stoker's Dracula

The Embodiment of Victorian Taboos

Présenté pour l'obtention du mémoire du Master 1
Option Littérature

Préparé sous la direction de Béatrice Bijon, Maître de conférences
Présenté et soutenu publiquement par Charlène BUSALLI

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The vampire is the poetic expression of our deepest fears, and the shadow of our most primal urges.

Vampire: The Masquerade

Introduction

Although Count Dracula is unquestionably the most famous vampire in the world, many people have never read Bram Stoker's novel. From the status of character in a work of fiction, the Count has rapidly turned into the archetypal representative of a whole species of supernatural creatures, and even went so far as to eclipse his own creator. Nevertheless, Bram Stoker and his masterpiece are far from being forgotten. Various scholars and critics have devoted entire books and articles in order to try and interpret a novel which is far more complex than it seems when read for the first time. In particular, the centenary of its publication which was celebrated in 1997 brought about renewed interest in Stoker's *Dracula*. While many critical works focus on one theme in particular, the present work proposes to show how all the main themes in the novel−sexuality, religion, or colonisation to cite only a few of them−are interrelated to represent the end of a whole era, namely the Victorian period, through the subversion of its most basic taboos. Bram Stoker's genius lies in the skilful combination he manages to complete between extremely varied sources of inspiration. The purpose of this work is not to provide the reader with a comprehensive list, but to demonstrate how these different sources from vampire mythology, previous fictional works, and real historical facts work together to create a concrete, evocative representation of Victorian taboos.

The Oxford English Dictionary defines reality as “correspondence to fact; truth.” However, this does not help us much, for there exists such a notion as fictional truth as well. Nonetheless, reality and fiction are used in the present work as two antithetic notions, the former to refer to events and facts which have actually occurred in the historical past, and the latter to designate “the species of literature which is concerned with the narration of imaginary events and the portraiture of imaginary characters,” as formulated by the *OED*. At the risk of departing from conventional practice, poetry will also be considered as pertaining to fiction for simplicity's sake. Although myth always has a historical foundation, it is clearly at odds with the notion of reality. Similarly, although it does involve imaginary characters and events, it is not synonymous with fiction. The definition provided by Cuddon's *Dictionary of Literary Terms*, “a story which is not 'true' and which involves (as a rule) supernatural

beings−or at any rate supra-human beings,"[1] expresses fairly well what is generally meant by myth in the present work, but also what will alternatively be called folklore, as a form of popular myth. Nevertheless, the notion of myth implies certain specific aspects which the term folklore does not convey as fully. First, the idea that myth is based on reality, though its precise origin has been forgotten, is important to bear in mind as we proceed to analyse Bram Stoker's fantastic novel.[2] Moreover, David Glover asserts that "one way in which a myth may be defined is as a structure of repetitions, as a story whose essential features are always known by its audience,"[3] an idea which is in accordance with what Roland Barthes called the "imperative, buttonholing character"[4] of myth. This should be kept in mind when discussing myth's capacity to convey to the reader a certain representation of taboos which appertain to the human super-ego, to use Freudian terms. The concept of taboo is also quite complex, but the following definition provided by the *OED* is enlightening enough to begin with: "the putting of a person or thing under prohibition or interdict, perpetual or temporary; the fact or condition of being so placed; the prohibition or interdict itself." Throughout this work, we shall regularly refer to Sigmund Freud's *Totem and Taboo* in order to shed more light on this complex notion.

The first chapter of the present work will in fact concentrate on a notion which is closely related to that of taboo, namely fear. In a first part, we will see how literary devices in *Dracula* contribute significantly to the inspiration of fear. Secondly, we shall argue that fear was actually an important feature of the decadent atmosphere of late Victorian Britain, of which Stoker's novel can be construed as a representation. The second chapter of this work will focus on seduction and sexuality, demonstrating that the way in which they are represented in *Dracula* identifies them as areas which encompassed a substantial amount of taboos in the Victorian age. Count Dracula's indebtedness to the figure of the Byronic vampire, but also his significant contribution to its enhancement, unveil the sexual undertones permeating the seduction game initiated by the vampires in *Dracula*. As we shall see, taboos regarding both female sexuality and homosexuality are represented in Stoker's novel. The strict standards imposed by Victorian society in terms of sexuality will lead us to unveil the

[1] *A Dictionary of Literary Terms*, ed. J. A. Cuddon, London, André Deutsch, 1977, p. 400.
[2] "Le mythe est constitué par la déperdition de la qualité historique des choses : les choses perdent en lui le souvenir de leur fabrication" (Roland Barthes, *Mythologies*, Paris, Seuil, 1970, p. 230).
[3] David Glover, *Vampires, Mummies, and Liberals: Bram Stoker and the Politics of Popular Fiction*, Durham and London, Duke University Press, 1996, p. 138.
[4] Barthes, *op. cit.*, p. 210.

process of rejection of the Other, i.e. of what was constructed by the collective imagination of the period as fundamentally discrepant from the British subject, which is inherent to the notion of taboo and which climaxed in the *fin-de-siècle* xenophobic discourse. The third chapter of this work will show that this particular discourse permeates Stoker's *Dracula*. Indeed, Count Dracula's otherness is evident from his following the tradition of famous mythological figures of rejection. Furthermore, we shall argue that, both in late Victorian Britain and in Stoker's novel, the rejection of the Other is intricately related to the fear of reverse colonisation. In *Dracula*, this anxiety brings about a veritable struggle for power between the British and the Other, from which the former certainly do not emerge victorious by the end of the novel.

1. Fear in *Dracula*: The Shattering of Certainties

The concept of taboo originally implies an idea of fear. Indeed, in his ground-breaking work on the subject, Freud asserts that the "collocation 'holy dread' would often coincide in meaning with 'taboo'"[5]. Fear is a central notion in *Dracula*, which is clearly revealed by the word's appearing on two hundred and five occasions in the novel, not to mention its various synonyms. Fear is the *sine qua non* of the Fantastic genre according to H. P. Lovecraft[6], but it is also a feeling pervading late-nineteenth-century Britain. Thus, the choice of the Fantastic genre to convey the specific atmosphere of *fin-de-siècle* Britain is particularly relevant. A number of devices are developed in *Dracula* in order to arouse fear in the reader's mind. First, hesitation is necessary for the reader to experience this fear, and is produced by three main circumstances in *Dracula*: the problem of denomination, or clear definition, encountered by a number of characters; the blurred line between dream and reality in the narrators' minds; and finally, the threat of madness hanging over some of these narrators. Moreover, the unusual form of the novel itself also plays a part in the arousal of hesitation. All this induces the reader to doubt the narrators' reliability, but this sentiment is counterbalanced by the verisimilitude paradoxically produced by this same form of narrative, and also by the characterisation, and the handling of time in *Dracula*. Verisimilitude contributes to anchor the novel to the context in which it was written, namely late-nineteenth-century Britain. *Dracula* can indeed be read as a representation of the decadent atmosphere of *fin-de-siècle* Britain, with Dracula himself functioning as an anti-Messianic figure. The subversion of religion, in particular the reversal of the Eucharist which vampirism represents, are of special interest in this respect, for religiousness was a tremendously important aspect of Victorian society. However, modernity does not seem to be the remedy for this kind of perversion in *Dracula*, as it shall be shown that religious apotropaic devices prevail upon new technologies. This lack of confidence in modern science betrays the horrified reaction of the Victorians to the publication of such

[5] Sigmund Freud, *Totem and Taboo: Resemblances Between the Mental Lives of Savages and Neurotics* (1913), London, Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1972, p. 18.

[6] "Pour Lovecraft, le critère du fantastique ne se situe pas dans l'oeuvre mais dans l'expérience du lecteur ; et cette expérience doit être la peur" (Tzvetan Todorov, *Introduction à la littérature fantastique*, Paris, Seuil, 1970, p. 16).

scientific works as Charles Darwin's *The Origin of Species* (1859) which the novel illustrates. This general state of uncertainty was further exacerbated by the collapse of the Victorian social pattern, epitomised in *Dracula* by the weakness of the patriarchal figures as they helplessly witness the rising power of the New Woman, a form of femininity they try to quench desperately.

1.1. The Inspiration of Fear through Literary Devices

> *Atmosphere is the all-important thing, for the final criterion of authenticity is not the dovetailing of a plot but the creation of a given sensation.*
>
> *H. P. Lovecraft,* Supernatural Horror in Literature

a) Arousing Hesitation

In *Introduction à la littérature fantastique*, Tzvetan Todorov asserts that the Fantastic arises from the hesitation felt by a person who knows only the natural laws and who is now confronted to a phenomenon which seems supernatural.[7] Thus, *Dracula* is truly a Fantastic novel, for uncertainty pervades the whole text, and is in fact communicable. Indeed, although hesitation is felt by the characters of the novel in the first place, it is eventually transmitted to the reader who relies on their narratives as well. The characters' hesitation first stems from the difficulty they encounter when trying to define what they are afraid of, but also from the liminal position they occupy throughout the novel, between dream and reality, as well as between sanity and madness. Furthermore, the reader's feeling of uncertainty triggered by the apparent unreliability of the narrators is further exacerbated by the unusual form of this late Victorian novel.

When the characters of *Dracula* are confronted to the supernatural–which is of course embodied by the vampire in the novel–words seem to fail them. This is first revealed by two entries in the log of the *Demeter*, aboard which Count Dracula has reached Britain: “Men all

[7] “Le fantastique, c'est l'hésitation éprouvée par un être qui ne connaît que les lois naturelles, face à un évènement en apparence surnaturel” (Todorov, *op. cit.*, p. 29).

steady fellows, who sailed with me before. Mate could not make out what was wrong; they only told him there was *something*, and crossed themselves"; "Men […] would not say more than that there was *something* aboard"[8]. In their turn, Mina Murray–soon to become Mrs Harker–can only discern "something dark" or "something, long and dark" (p. 88), and Lucy Westenra expresses her confusion in the following terms: "I only wanted to be here in this spot–I don't know why, for I was afraid of something–I don't know what" (p. 94). It is significant that, for want of anything better, all these characters use the same vague term, "something", to refer to the entity which is none other than Count Dracula himself. The only certainty implied in this term is that the characters indeed cannot recognize anything human in this entity, an idea we shall come back to later on in this work. At this early stage of the story–Dracula has only just arrived in England–this only produces a sort of dramatic irony as, contrary to the characters mentioned above, the reader has already been presented with the diary that Jonathan kept during his stay at Castle Dracula so that s/he has little doubt that this frightening apparition is indeed the Count. Thus, in the present case, the reader does not yet share the characters' uncertainty when confronted to the supernatural. However, the characters' inability to describe what they see in plain terms already throws doubt on their narratorial capacities, and thus on the truthfulness of the story they are telling. As a consequence, the reader also experiences feelings of hesitation, not on the grounds that s/he is presented with supernatural phenomena, but owing to the questionable reliability of the narrators.

According to Tzvetan Todorov, the Fantastic is an experience of limits[9] and the characters of *Dracula* are indeed in a liminal position throughout the novel. Many of them are constantly wondering if what they are telling is only a dream they have had, or actual events which have really happened to them. Instances of this are numerous, as this feeling is experienced in turn by Jonathan Harker during his stay at Castle Dracula, his wife Mina, Dr. Seward, and even by Renfield, the supposedly madman who is in fact sane enough to realise just before his death that Dracula's attack on him was not a "terrible dream" but a "grim reality" (p. 243). A particularly interesting example is when Mina explains at one point in her journal: "I was not then a bit sleepy, at least so I thought; but I must have fallen asleep, for,

[8] Bram Stoker, *Dracula* (1897), Nina Auerbach and David J. Skal, ed., Norton Critical Edition, New York and London, W. W. Norton & Co., 1997, p. 81. All subsequent references to the text will be to this edition and page numbers will be cited parenthetically after the quote.
[9] "le fantastique représente une expérience des limites" (Todorov, *op. cit.*, p. 99).

except dreams, I do not remember anything until the morning when Jonathan woke me" (p. 227). Then she proceeds to write about what she cannot recognise at this point as being Dracula's first apparition to her in the form of fog. This time, no dramatic irony hinders the reader from sharing the character's uncertainty in the face of the supernatural occurrence, for, of all his shape-shifting powers, Dracula's ability to change into fog is by far the most baffling and, above all, the most unexpected. It is interesting to note that arousing hesitation in the reader's mind at this particular moment is not innocent on the part of Stoker, as it prepares the reader for the most frightful episode of the novel, namely Dracula's forcing Mina to drink his own blood. Incidentally, horror writer H. P. Lovecraft expresses the idea that "uncertainty and danger are always closely allied"[10]. Thus, prompting the reader to doubt that the events which are related are not the fruit of the narrators' imagination at this precise moment enables Stoker to create a tense atmosphere which reaches its climax in what is justifiably seen by many readers as the most horrifying scene in the novel.

Similarly, several characters hover dangerously between sanity and madness throughout the novel. For Carol A. Senf, "the question of sanity, which is so important in *Dracula*, provides another clue to the narrators' unreliability"[11]. Again, occurrences are numerous almost to the point of exaggeration; nevertheless, it is quite striking that the character who reflects the most on the possible insanity of his own self and of the other people who strive to fight Count Dracula is none other than John Seward, a doctor who is himself in charge of a lunatic asylum. Incidentally, this perplexing aspect of Seward's character would be taken up and emphasized by Francis Ford Coppola in his 1992 film adaptation *Bram Stoker's Dracula*, in which the physician appears as a neurotic-looking drug-addict. But to come back to the novel, one may be rightly astonished when one reads the words "I sometimes think we must be all mad and that we shall wake to sanity in strait-waistcoats" (p. 240) coming from a physician who is supposed to cure his patients of their madness. Moreover, as this statement appears quite late in the novel, one might be tempted to think that the characters must suffer from some kind of mass hysteria, not unlike the one which swept through Eastern Europe in the eighteenth century, when people did believe they were facing a vampire epidemic.

This constant throwing doubt on the narrators' reliability is in fact quite unusual, as the

[10] Howard Phillips Lovecraft, *Supernatural Horror in Literature* (1927), New York, Dover Publications, 1973, p. 14.
[11] Carol A. Senf, *"Dracula*: The Unseen Face in the Mirror" (1979), *Dracula*, ed. Nina Auerbach and David J. Skal, Norton Critical Edition, New York and London, W. W. Norton & Co., 1997, p. 424. All subsequent references to the essays contained in this edition will be abridged.

Victorian novel is better-known for being emblematic of the heyday of the God-like omniscient narrator, whom the reader can trust entirely. On the contrary, *Dracula* epitomizes the very modern constant questioning of narratorial authority. While some Modernist authors such as James Joyce would start calling for what Roland Barthes called "la mort de l'auteur"[12] several decades later, Stoker's novel already symbolizes the death of the omniscient narrator. As Carol A. Senf remarks, in *Dracula*, the "first clue" of the narrators' unreliability can be found in the short preface to the novel which states that "all the records chosen are […] given from the standpoints and within the range of knowledge of those who made them" (p. 5).[13] The Victorian idea that the narrator is the repository of universal truth is thus questioned even before the novel proper has actually started. Indeed, even the reliability of the narrator of this very preface is questionable as his identity is not revealed. It could be the only contribution of some sort of omniscient narrator, or a note by Bram Stoker on his own text, or an introduction by Jonathan Harker who is, after all, the narrator concluding the novel. In each case, the truthfulness of the story would remain undermined all the same. If this preface is the contribution of a supposedly omniscient narrator, then the latter does nothing but acknowledge his own powerlessness in asserting the truthfulness of the story, while if it is a note by Bram Stoker, or by the fictitious character Jonathan Harker, this only highlights the absence of a Victorian omniscient narrator who could have confirmed the truthfulness of the story. Therefore, *Dracula* excels in keeping the reader in a state of uncertainty from the very beginning to the very end of the novel, when Harker again reminds the reader:

> in all the mass of material of which the record is composed, there is hardly one authentic document; nothing but a mass of type-writing, except the later notebooks of Mina and Seward and myself, and Van Helsing's memorandum. (p. 326)

Yet, although the truthfulness of the story is constantly questioned in *Dracula*, it is never utterly negated. Indeed, the perceived unreliability of the narrators is counterbalanced by the impression of verisimilitude which is developed throughout the novel, once more keeping the reader uncertain of what he should believe.

[12] See Roland Barthes, "The Death of the Author" (1968), *The Norton Anthology of Theory and Criticism*. New York and London: W. W. Norton & Co., 1972, pp. 1466-1470.
[13] Senf, *op. cit.*, p. 422.

b) Verisimilitude in Dracula

In *Fictional Truth*, Michael Riffaterre expresses the idea that "truth in fiction rests on verisimilitude, a system of representations that seems to reflect a reality external to the text"[14] and that "it is experienced through enactment by reading, it is a performative event in which participation on the reader's part can only serve to hammer the text's plausibility into his experience"[15]. Thus, verisimilitude helps create an illusion of reality through the reader's imagination; it induces the reader to form analogies between what he is reading about and the reality in which s/he is living. As a consequence, although it is more often associated with Realism, verisimilitude is essential to the Fantastic as well, and, particularly to the novel under study in this case, for it is a key factor in order to arouse in the reader's mind the kind of fear inspired by what Freud called the uncanny, namely "that class of the frightening which leads back to what is known of old and long familiar"[16]. Verisimilitude is constructed in the novel through three main literary devices: the particular form of the narrative, the realistic characterisation of the narrators which offers a sharp contrast to the vampires' supernatural nature, and the faithful handling of time.

Paradoxically, although the very form of the novel contributes to throw doubt on the credibility of the story, it is also this particular form which induces the reader to forget this warning almost instantly. Indeed, not only did Bram Stoker draw inspiration from the diary form of the narrative in Wilkie Collins's *The Woman in White* (1860) which is "told throughout by the characters of the book,"[17] but he also made it more complex by adding newspaper clippings, telegrams, various letters, and even, as was shown previously, extracts from a log-book, as so many proofs that the story which is being told is not the result of invention, or of collective hallucination, on the part of the character-narrators. Stoker seemed to find this unusual form of narration particularly effective, as he would adopt it again in his later Fantastic novel *The Lady of the Shroud* (1909). It is certainly true that the traditional epistolary novel comprising only letters, which was made popular in the eighteenth century by Samuel Richardson's *Pamela* (1740), and even the diary form of the narrative which was a

[14] Michael Riffaterre, *Fictional Truth*, Baltimore, Johns Hopkins University Press, 1990, p. XIII.
[15] *Ibid.*, p. XIV.
[16] Sigmund Freud, "The Uncanny" (1919), *The Standard Edition of the Complete Psychological Works of Sigmund Freud*, Vol. XII, London, Vintage, 2001, p. 220.
[17] Wilkie Collins, *The Woman in White* (1860), *The Woman in White, The Moonstone, The Law of the Lady*, Preface to the 1860 edition, Oxford, Oxford University Press, 1994, p. 3.

source of inspiration to Stoker, could not have answered this purpose so fully since the reliability of the narrators is still quite likely to be questioned in both cases. However, in *Dracula*, whenever the veracity of the characters' narratives is put into question, the seemingly external contributions to the story which the newspaper clippings appear to be point to the–albeit fictional–truthfulness of the story.

Moreover, the very identity of the characters makes the story of *Dracula* more believable. According to Tzvetan Todorov, the choicest conditions for the Fantastic to appear in a work of fiction are the association of supernatural events with a natural narrator[18], which is exactly the case in *Dracula*. Indeed, all the narrators are living human beings as opposed to their vampire enemies. Significantly, when Mina is gradually changing into a vampire during the final chase after Count Dracula, her writing becomes scarcer, Van Helsing explaining that, as they are approaching Castle Dracula, "[she] make no entry into her little diary, she who write so faithful at every pause" (p. 314). The vampires are thus denied a voice in effect. Accordingly, the character-narrators come to represent normality in the reader's mind, which incidentally facilitates identification with them. As a consequence, the reader finds in the character-narrators of *Dracula* elements which s/he can relate to her/his own experience of reality. Furthermore, their professional occupations make the characters seemingly trustworthy. Indeed, several characters are in the learned professions: John Seward is a doctor, Jonathan Harker is only a clerk at the beginning of the novel but later becomes a solicitor, and Van Helsing is famous for his numerous reputable occupations, being among other things a professor, a doctor, and a lawyer. Joëlle Prungnaud remarks that from the very beginning of the novel, Stoker assigns perception to a rational mind, insisting upon Harker's clear-headedness and attentiveness.[19] Similarly, when Van Helsing endeavours to make Seward infer that Lucy has become a vampire, the latter writes in his diary "Surely there must be *some* rational explanation of all these mysterious things" and, true to himself, wonders if the explanation is not that Van Helsing's mind has become "unhinged" (p. 181). Thus, the character-narrators' incredulity towards the events they are witnessing naturally induces the

[18] "Les évènements sont surnaturels, le narrateur est naturel : voici d'excellentes conditions pour que le fantastique apparaisse" (Todorov, *op. cit.*, p. 89).

[19] "Même si l'on ne croit pas aux vampires, et surtout si l'on n'y croit pas, on ne peut manquer d'être sensible au bon sens de Jonathan Harker, qui observe avec le plus d'acuité et d'attention possibles, avec méfiance et sang-froid, les évènements aberrants dont il est le malheureux témoin. Au lieu de relater les faits en focalisant le récit sur le regard de l'héroïne, d'une excessive sensibilité et trop vite effarouchée, l'auteur adopte la perception froide et rationnelle d'un homme courageux et sensé" (Joëlle Prungnaud, *Gothique et décadence: recherches sur la continuité d'un mythe et d'un genre au XIXe siècle en Grande-Bretagne et en France*, Paris, Honoré Champion, 1997, p. 326).

reader to think them trustworthy despite the warning which is given in the anonymous preface to the novel.

In *Dracula*, the diary form of the narrative also enables Stoker to create verisimilitude through the handling of time. Notwithstanding the few editorial mistakes on the part of the author, the dating of the various documents which form the novel provides a realistic temporal setting for the story. As Mina Harker herself expresses, "[in] this matter, dates are everything, and I think that if we get all our material ready, and have every item put in chronological order, we shall have done much" (p. 198). The plot indeed follows a linear temporal setting; if one excepts the concluding note written by Jonathan Harker seven years after the events related in the novel took place, literary devices such as long ellipses, analepses, or prolepses are scarcely present in *Dracula*. Moreover, critics have in fact found out that the dates in the novel are the same as those of the year 1893. For Christopher Frayling, who again refers to the anonymous preface to the novel, "it is quite possible that Stoker was already sorting out the timescale of *Dracula* in that same year, for we know that he wanted the events to seem 'exactly contemporary'"[20]. Furthermore, still according to Frayling, who has studied Bram Stoker's working notes carefully, one can find among them:

> a detailed timetable of train arrivals and departures from London to Paris, Paris to Munich, Munich to Vienna via Salzburg, Vienna to Budapest, Budapest to Klausenburg, Klausenburg to Bistritz and of the coach journey from Bistritz to the Borgo Pass. Stoker simply transposed this timetable (from Baedeker's) into his own order of events.[21]

Thus, Bram Stoker was meticulous to the point of using the exact timetables of his time to make his characters' journeys as plausible as possible. It is obvious that he was intent on convincing his contemporary readers that the reality in which the story of *Dracula* is set could be their own reality, and that the events happening in the novel could therefore happen to them. In this sense, the fact that *Dracula* was written and published in *fin-de-siècle* Britain is of tremendous importance to understand the novel, for the text is pervaded with the decadent atmosphere characterising this period.

[20] Christopher Frayling, *Vampyres: Lord Byron to Count Dracula*, London, Faber and Faber, 1992, p. 315.
[21] *Ibid.*, p. 316.

1.2. *Dracula* as Representation of the Decadent Atmosphere of Fin-de-Siècle Britain

> *Le XIXe siècle vivait, il est vrai, dans une métaphysique du réel et de l'imaginaire, et la littérature fantastique n'est rien d'autre que la mauvaise conscience de ce XIXe siècle positiviste.*
>
> *Tzvetan Todorov,* Introduction à la littérature fantastique

a) Dracula as an Anti-Messianic Figure

Turns of the centuries are usually permeated with end-of-the-world images, and it is no wonder that a period so imbued with religious, moral, and social uncertainties as late-nineteenth-century Britain should produce apocalyptic visions in literature. An allegorical reading of *Dracula* throws light upon the novel as such a vision, for Count Dracula himself can be construed as one of the numerous nineteenth-century literary representations of the Antichrist. In the following pages, we shall see that the subversion of Christianity is actually a dominant feature of vampirism. Thus, the reversal of the Eucharist which the act of vampirism represents is worth dwelling upon in this respect.

Michael J. Dennison stresses that "Dracula himself is really more a great amorphous power than a character. He is a natural force or even deity, a personification of a cosmos of disorder, avatar of the universal spirit of entropy."[22] This point of view is corroborated by Renfield's devoted attitude towards the Count, whom he regards as a Messiah. Just as Christ had promised salvation to his followers ("He that believeth and is baptised shall be saved," Mark 16:16), Renfield similarly expects to be rewarded for his devotion:

> I am here to do Your bidding, Master. I am Your slave, and You will reward me, for I shall be faithful. I have worshipped You long and afar off. Now that You are near, I await Your commands, and You will not pass me by, will You, dear Master, in Your distribution of good things? (p. 98)

It is worth noting that the pronouns and possessive adjectives referring to Dracula are capitalised, as is the general custom when one writes about God. Renfield's words

[22] Michael J. Dennison, *Vampirism: Literary Tropes of Decadence and Entropy*, New York, Peter Lang, 2001, p. 84.

significantly lead Dr. Seward to diagnose him with “religious mania” (p. 96). Moreover, Gary L. Green asserts:

> In the repressed society of Victorian England, Dracula is perceived as an almost apocalyptic agent who seeks to destroy every social convention and moral conviction in his efforts to bring the outside world into his world of living death, where pleasure is momentary and torment eternal, a daring inversion of Christ's promise of eternal life through drinking his blood.[23]

Indeed, Van Helsing himself draws an apocalyptic picture of what the world would become should the vampire, who is accordingly associated with Satan, prevail: “if it had not been that we crossed his path he would be yet—he may be yet if we fail—the father or furtherer of a new order of beings; whose road must lead through Death, not Life” (p. 263). The reader is thus presented with a full portrait of the figure of the Antichrist, who has come to promise immortality to men, luring them thereby into eternal damnation.

Temptation by the Antichrist, usually in the guise of the Devil himself, is a recurrent theme in nineteenth-century European literature, the two most famous instances of which being Goethe's *Faust* (1808) and Charles Maturin's *Melmoth the Wanderer* (1820). The former Stoker knew well as the play was staged in 1885 at the Lyceum Theatre which he managed on behalf of famous actor Henry Irving, and the latter was certainly familiar to him as one of the century's most famous literary representations of the mythical Wandering Jew to which Stoker devoted a chapter in his *Famous Impostors* (1910). Although the theme is thus not original, the myth of vampirism is particularly appropriate for anti-Messianic imagery, for it has a long history of religious subversion. Indeed, in Eastern European folklore for instance, people who did not abide by religious rules were the likeliest to become vampires after their death. One can cite for example suicides, an idea developed by Stoker through Dracula's places of residence. One of the estates the Count purchases in England is indeed called “Carfax” which, the editors note, means “a place where four roads meet,” adding that “suicides, who, according to some legends, returned to life as vampires were traditionally buried at crossroads” (p. 28). In Romanian folklore, illegitimate children were also said to be likely to be born as vampires, as pointed out by Emily Gerard in her essay “Transylvanian Superstitions” which Bram Stoker consulted in the course of his research on Eastern Europe:

[23] Gary L. Green, “Vampirism,” *Dictionary of Literary Themes and Motifs*, ed. Jean-Charles Seigneuret, Westport and London, Greenwood Press, 1988, p. 1381.

"There are two sorts of vampire–living and dead. The living vampire is in general the illegitimate offspring of two illegitimate persons"[24].

Nevertheless, the most interesting aspect of vampirism with regard to the subversion of the Christian religion is, as pointed out by Gary L. Green, the reversal of the Eucharist it symbolises. In his article on vampirism published in the *Dictionary of Literary Themes and Motifs*, Green underlines the "major contradiction"[25] which exists in the Bible between the taboo of blood consumption in the Old Testament ("Only be sure that thou eat not the blood: for the blood *is* the life; and thou mayest not eat the life with the flesh." Deuteronomy 12:23), and Christ's invitation to drink his blood in order to acquire eternal life ("Whoso eateth my flesh, and drinketh my blood, hath eternal life; and I will raise him up at the last day." John 6:54). In *Dracula*, Renfield justifies his unnatural behaviour by quoting the Bible:

> The doctor here will bear me out that on one occasion I tried to kill him for the purpose of strengthening my vital powers by the assimilation with my own body of his life through the medium of his blood–relying, of course, upon the Scriptural phrase, "For the blood is the life." (p. 206)

What is anti-Messianic about Dracula is precisely his implementing Christ's words literally, promising immortality to his followers through the consumption of human blood. However, immortality in this case does not mean eternal bliss, but eternal damnation. In this sense, Renfield can be construed as an ironical embodiment of Victorian religious hypocrisy, ironical because, instead of expecting a reward from God, he expects his from an evil force. Nevertheless, his attitude truly parallels that of a religious hypocrite, worshipping a deity only in the hope that he shall be rewarded for it. As Dr. Seward remarks, referring again to the Bible: "He thinks of the loaves and fishes even when he believes he is in a Real Presence" (p. 98). Although it is doubtful that it was intentional on the part of Stoker, the Renfield sub-plot therefore exposes an important taboo in Victorian high society, namely the taboo of religious hypocrisy.

[24] Emily Gerard, qtd. in Frayling, *op. cit.*, p. 325.
[25] Green, *op. cit.*, p. 1375.

b) The Failure of Modernity

Despite the hints of the religious decline affecting late-nineteenth-century Britain which can be found in *Dracula*, Bram Stoker was far from sharing the Victorian naturalists' view that religion was some outdated superstition. On the contrary, the novel can be interpreted as an appeal not to abandon religion, presenting it as a shield against certain kinds of evil. In fact, the characters' horrified reaction to the vampires' animality points to the turmoil felt by the Victorians in the wake of the publication of *The Origin of Species* (1859) in which Charles Darwin expounded his theory of evolution. Moreover, Renfield's obsession with souls betrays the existential problem which Victorian scientific positivism triggered by discrediting religion without being able to provide an alternative to it, leaving thereby late Victorian society in a state of spiritual void.

In *Dracula*, Bram Stoker does pay tribute to new technological devices: Jonathan Harker shows Dracula photographs of Carfax which he has taken with his “Kodak” (p. 29), Mina uses a “typewriter” (p. 55), and Dr. Seward enters his diary in a “phonograph” (p. 61). Therefore, it would be erroneous to think that the novel displays a complete aversion to technological and scientific advances. However, in *Dracula*, modern devices do not seem to be the solution to all difficulties. This idea is clearly expressed in Harker's assertion that “the old centuries had, and have, powers of their own which mere 'modernity' cannot kill” (p. 41). Religious and folkloric apotropaic devices, such as Van Helsing's “little golden crucifix” (p. 188), the “Sacred Wafer” (p. 247), or even garlic with its mythical properties, are in fact presented as the only effective weapons against Dracula and his associates. This choice is above all symbolical, for it implies a criticism of extreme scientific positivism which is plainly expressed by Van Helsing: “Ah, it is the fault of our science that it wants to explain all, and if it explain not, then it says there is nothing to explain” (p. 171). The professor in fact points out that this kind of scepticism is a real danger to humanity, as men who do not believe in the vampire would not care to fight him, and would thus be rapidly subdued: “in this enlightened age, when men believe not even what they see, the doubting of wise men would be [Dracula's] greatest strength” (p. 279). This clearly suggests that refuting superstitious beliefs, which were created as attempts to account for seemingly inexplicable phenomena, but without being able to provide an explanation for the latter, is considered worse than letting people have false beliefs, as it ultimately leaves them confused and powerless, having in

effect no beliefs at all. Therefore, a certain nostalgia for past scientific methods, which are presented as broader-minded, can be felt through the character of Van Helsing. For instance, at one point of the story, Seward explains in his journal:

> Van Helsing is off to the British Museum looking up some authorities on ancient medicine. The old physicians took account of things which their followers do not accept, and the professor is searching for witch and demon cures which may be useful to us later." (p. 240)

Thus, despite Stoker's admiration for technological innovations, *Dracula* is far from being an apology of the new scientific methods.

Not only was the author of *Dracula* not impressed by modern naturalistic methods, but his vampire story reveals that, like many of his contemporaries, he was in all probability horrified by the Darwinian theory of evolution. Charles Darwin, who, ironically enough, proved superstitions on vampire bats wrong according to Christopher Frayling[26], was in many Victorian minds the man who had made monsters of human beings by attempting to demonstrate that they were mere animals at a higher stage of evolution than all others. In *Dracula*, the Count's reptilian movements described by a horrified Harker are strongly reminiscent of the animals which Darwin discovered on the Galapagos Islands and which helped him form his theory of evolution:

> my very feelings turned to repulsion and terror when I saw the whole man slowly emerge from the window and begin to crawl down the castle wall over that dreadful abyss, *face down* […] just as a lizard moves along a wall. (p. 39)

In fact, the degenerate form of humanity represented in the vampires is characterised in the novel by inordinate animality: the fair-haired vampire woman who seduces Harker "licked her lips like an animal" (p. 42) and vampire Lucy "drew back with an angry snarl, such as a cat gives when taken unawares" (p. 188). Significantly, in Stoker's working notes which are partly reproduced in *Vampyres: Lord Byron to Count Dracula*, Dracula's first characteristic trait is that he "goes through life entirely by instinct"[27]. Thus, in the wake of the theory of evolution, *Dracula* presents the reader with the late Victorian fear of degeneration.

Furthermore, Stoker's novel epitomises the existential crisis which Darwinian and other naturalistic theories triggered. Again, the Renfield sub-plot is quite enlightening, for the

[26] "Eventually, it took Charles Darwin to set the record straight: the vampire bat did *not* have the face of a man, it lived in central southern America rather than the south of France and it was tiny−so tiny in fact that intercourse with a human being might prove something of a technical problem" (Frayling, *op. cit.*, p. 36).
[27] Bram Stoker, qtd. in Frayling, *ibid.*, p. 308.

(supposedly) madman's reaction when Dr. Seward happens to mention souls is fascinating in this respect. Indeed, Renfield is given to eating insects and other small animals alive because he is convinced that he will eventually acquire eternal life by taking their lives in this way. However, when Dr. Seward introduces the subject of souls ("You've got their lives, you know, and you must put up with their souls!"), Renfield's reaction is a violent one:

> Something seemed to affect his imagination, for he put his fingers to his ears and shut his eyes, screwing them up tightly just as a small boy does when his face is being soaped. […] "To hell with you and your souls!" He shouted. "Why do you plague me about souls." (pp. 237-238)

Renfield's dismissal of the subject of souls in fact reflects Victorian naturalists' difficulty to explain the human soul. Just as Renfield's seemingly scientific method of reproducing the food chain–he catches flies to feed spiders, then feed the spiders to sparrows, and finally eats the sparrows himself when he is refused a kitten–does not enable him to avoid the problem of souls, while nineteenth-century naturalists set out to destroy the credibility of religion, shattering thereby the moral grounds of Victorian society, their scientific positivism left them unable to tackle the problem of the human soul, leaving a spiritual void in place of the now obsolete religious dogmas. Frank Miller Turner expresses this idea in the following words:

> So long as the discussion was limited to the "universe of things," naturalistic writers could discuss man. He was an animal descended from more brutish animals. Science gave him power over physical nature so that he might progress toward his end, which was the civilization of the New Nature. But of man considered as a problem to himself and within himself or of man confronting existential dilemmas, such as death, naturalistic writers could not and would not speak in public.[28]

In this sense, Renfield's seemingly insane quest for eternal life may symbolise the despair felt by the Victorians at the thought that their souls might not be immortal. All of a sudden, they were left to cope with the dreadful idea that death only led to nothingness, and wondering about what they now perceived as the meaninglessness of life without the guidance of religion. The first philosophical movement to tackle this anxiety with satisfactory results would be the existentialist movement, but as it became popular only in the twentieth century, late Victorians were left with a few decades of inner turmoil.

[28] Frank Miller Turner, *Between Science and Religion: The Reaction to Scientific Naturalism in Late Victorian England*, New Haven and London, Yale University Press, 1974, p. 29.

c) The End of the Victorian Social Pattern

The state of spiritual uncertainty of late-nineteenth-century Britain was further aggravated by the wave of social changes sweeping over the country during the same period. Some of these major changes concerned primarily gender roles within the social sphere, and are epitomized by John Stuart Mill's proposing women's suffrage for the first time in his platform as a Member of Parliament candidate in 1865, as well as by the ensuing Suffragette movement. In *Dracula*, the highly depreciative representation of the New Woman certainly betrays the Victorian anxiety of the rising social power of women. In addition, the decline of masculine authority witnessed by late Victorian society is paralleled in the novel by the failure of the patriarchal figures to defeat their enemy definitely.

Although the figure of the New Woman originated mainly in the emerging Suffragette movement, it was above all a "discursive phenomenon"[29] according to Sally Ledger, and Bram Stoker's Dracula has undoubtedly contributed to the creation of this fictional figure which was designed to discredit late-nineteenth-century feminist movements. Indeed, in their introduction to the novel, Nina Auerbach and David J. Skal affirm:

> the strange changes Dracula catalyzes in Lucy and Mina–seemingly, of all London's 'teeming millions', the only mortals on whom he preys–are symptomatic of the changes men feared in all their women. (p. XI)

Accordingly, Mina, who stands for the ideal Victorian wife for the greatest part of the novel ("When we are married I shall be able to be useful to Jonathan," p. 55), derides the New Woman on two occasions. First, she is sarcastic about the will to shock which was ascribed to the New Woman: "I believe we should have shocked the 'New Woman' with our appetites" (p. 86). The second time, she expresses more directly her contempt at the New Woman's claim to a certain amount of marital power:

> Some of the 'New Women' writers will some day start an idea that men and women should be allowed to see each other asleep before proposing or accepting. But I suppose the New Woman won't condescend in future to accept; she will do the proposing herself. (pp. 86-87)

However, her friend Lucy shares some attributes with this figure even before becoming a vampire. According to Sally Ledger, "one of the defining features of the dominant discourse

[29] Sally Ledger, *The New Woman: Fiction and Feminism at the* fin-de-siècle, Manchester and New York, Manchester University Press, 1997, p. 3.

on the New Woman at the *fin-de-siècle* was the supposition that the New Woman posed a threat to the institution of marriage."[30] Lucy's exclamation "Why can't they let a girl marry three men, or as many as want her, and save all this trouble?" (p. 60) when she is obliged to reject two of her suitors betrays her affinity with fictional and journalistic representations of *fin-de-siècle* feminists through the threat of polygamy. As Nina Auerbach and David J. Skal point out—probably alluding to multiple-divorced actress Ellen Terry—Stoker himself witnessed the weakening state of the institution of marriage: "During Stoker's long career at the Lyceum, he saw the fissures in imperial British society and the hierarchical English family" (p. X). The question of women's growing marital power seems to have been of particular concern to Stoker, as he would come back to this question in his novel *The Man* (1905), in which a young woman, Stephen Norman, proposes to a man on her own initiative, an act which has serious consequences as she undergoes the humiliation of being refused and realises too late that she did not even love the man she has proposed to, and that she has in fact driven into exile the man she really loves by her rash acts. In *Dracula*, Lucy's cruelty towards the children whom she feeds upon as a vampire, is also typical of the misogynistic view of *fin-de-siècle* feminism: "With a careless motion, she flung to the ground, callous as a devil, the child that up to now she had clutched strenuously to her breast, growling over it as a dog growls over a bone" (p. 188). As the editors note,

> The vampire Lucy is very much of her decade in this callousness toward children. Lethal anti-mothers were a fixture in 1890s literature, especially in works by conservative polemicists who feared feminism as a threat to woman's maternal mission. (p. 188)

Jonathan Harker confirms the idea that motherhood is what defines women—or that it is women's "manifest destiny"[31] as Clive Leatherdale puts it—when he says of the woman whose child has been killed by Dracula and who is in turn devoured by the wolves which the Count commands: "I could not pity her, for I knew now what had become of her child, and she was better dead." (p. 49) Interestingly, Ken Gelder points out that, in *Dracula*, "the vampire women's behaviour is always represented to us by men."[32] Therefore, as a masculine construction—by a male author and by male narrators—the female vampire lays bare Victorian men's fear of this New Woman who seemed to be gradually supplanting the traditional Victorian woman.

[30] *Ibid.*, p. 11.
[31] Clive Leatherdale, *Dracula: The Novel and the Legend: A Study of Bram Stoker's Gothic Masterpiece*, Wellingborough, Northamptonshire, The Aquarian Press, 1985, p. 139.
[32] Ken Gelder, *Reading the Vampire*, London and New York, Routledge, 1994, p. 75.

The end of the novel is unambiguous on one point: destroying Dracula was primarily necessary in order to save the figure of the Mother. Van Helsing expresses this idea clearly while holding Mina's and Jonathan's son, little Quincey, in his lap:

> This boy will some day know what a brave and gallant woman his mother is. Already he knows her sweetness and loving care; later on he will understand how some men so loved her, that they did much for her sake. (p. 327)

Leaving aside the possible Oedipal interpretation of such a statement and of the novel in general which is beyond the scope of this work, one may safely assert that the avowed aim of the male characters as well as of the novel itself is thus to preserve the maternal Victorian woman who becomes in this view the basis of a healthy society. However, the apparent failure of the paternal figures of the novel to do so is an obvious sign of their declining authority. Throughout the novel, the emphasis is put on the weaknesses of men; some of them are constantly threatened with insanity, and others are barely able to resist the temptations of the sexually provocative female vampires. Moreover, their protective instinct–or, some would say, their misogynistic prejudices–induce them to reject the precious help of Mina Harker ("it is no part for a woman," Van Helsing, p. 207; "It is too great a strain for a woman to bear," Harker, p. 223), thereby facilitating Dracula's assault on her. The result of these weaknesses and tactical errors is to be found in the ambiguousness of the men's success in eradicating the threat which the vampire represents. Indeed, a number of critics, among whom Clive Leatherdale and Phyllis A. Roth, have noticed that the procedure to kill a vampire given by Van Helsing ("cut off his head and burn his heart or drive a stake through it," p. 181) is not respected in the case of Count Dracula. Mina's following report reveals that Dracula might have simply used his shape-shifting powers to escape:

> But, on the instant, came the sweep and flash of Jonathan's great knife. I shrieked as I saw it shear through the throat; whilst at the same moment Mr Morris's bowie knife plunged into the heart.
> It was like a miracle; but before our very eyes, and almost in the drawing of a breath, the whole body crumbled into dust and passed from our sight. (p. 325)

This persisting doubt has enabled various writers to imagine a sequel to the novel–the latest being the "official" sequel by one of Stoker's great-grand-nephew, Dacre Stoker's *Dracula: The Un-Dead* (2009)–although Bram Stoker himself never disclosed a wish to write a sequel to *Dracula*. One may wonder if this final ambiguity was really deliberate on the part of

Stoker, especially since many of his other novels are romances with happy endings. Nevertheless, whether it was conscious or not, this throwing doubt on the victory of the men over the vampire maintains the hesitation felt by the reader throughout the novel to the very end. Eventually, the impression thereby created that everything might not be resolved in the end makes *Dracula* a novel thoroughly representative of the state of uncertainty which was inherent to late Victorian Britain.

For Daniel Pick, "Part of [*Dracula*]'s task was to represent, externalise and kill off a distinct constellation of contemporary fears."[33] To this end, literary devices are used to produce a feeling of fear: the arousal of hesitation specific to the Fantastic genre keeps the reader under strain throughout the novel while verisimilitude leads her/him to form analogies between the novel and her/his own reality. However, not only is the decadent atmosphere of the Victorian *fin-de-siècle*, which is further developed through the allegorical representation of Dracula as an anti-Messianic figure, thus reproduced in *Dracula*, but the very context which engendered this pervading feeling of fear is translated in the novel through the failure of modernity to stop the process of decadence under way, as well as through its aggravating effects, such as triggering a spiritual crisis on top of the social crisis. As we have seen, this social crisis pertained to a great extent to gender roles as masculine authority was declining while a growing number of women called for changes in their social, and especially in their marital, roles. The second chapter of this work constitutes an endeavour to demonstrate that not only were gender roles being reshaped in a social context in late-nineteenth-century Britain, but that they were also changing in a more intimate sphere. As yet, the notion of taboo only underlay the themes which were touched upon. Such taboos as religious hypocrisy or naturalist theories for instance were mentioned, taboos which are in fact essentially discursive, i.e. taboos which the *OED* defines as "topic[s] considered offensive and hence avoided by social custom." The second and third chapters of this work will concentrate on the two axes around which most of Victorian taboos revolved, namely sexuality and strangeness, which were, like any taboo, in part discursive, but which in reality transcended the mere idea of social conventions. Indeed, it will appear that these taboos are closer to the original

[33] Daniel Pick, *Faces of Degeneration: A European Disorder, c. 1848 – c. 1918*, Cambridge and New York, Cambridge University Press, 1989, p. 167.

meaning which Sigmund Freud assigned to this notion in *Totem and Taboos*. Although Freud and his successors have recognised basic sexual taboos and taboos concerning foreigners in a great number of societies around the globe, suggesting that they are common attributes of human societies in general, *Dracula*'s powerful representation of these taboos underlines their central position in the Victorian society which inspired the novel so much.

2. From Seduction to Sexuality

According to Sigmund Freud, a taboo is originally "a primaeval prohibition forcibly imposed (by some authority) from outside, and directed against the most powerful longings to which human beings are subject"[34]. Whether in its mythical or in its fictional form, the vampire has always been associated with these forbidden "longings," which therefore makes this supernatural creature among all others quite appropriate for the embodiment of Victorian sexual taboos. Bram Stoker's combined use of mythological and folkloric data, as well as of elements from previous fictional representations of the vampire enabled him to construct a hybrid vampire figure capable of encapsulating the sexual fears of late Victorian Britain. The first part of this chapter will focus on *Dracula*'s substantial contribution to the figure of the Byronic vampire which was initiated by British writers in the early nineteenth century. Stoker provided this fictional figure with a more definite shape by accentuating its monstrosity, borrowing for this purpose features of the folkloric vampire, while preserving its seductive aura, making it thereby more uncanny. Count Dracula inherited from the Byronic hero his lack of sympathy for humanity, going so far as using women as baits for men, taking over the role of the serpent precipitating the Fall of Man. The role of temptress which this pattern ascribes to woman should come as no surprise in a story taking place in a Victorian era which did not understand female sexuality, and would indeed rather deny that women could feel carnal pleasure. In *fin-de-siècle* literature, the taboo of female sexuality is epitomized by the figure of the *femme fatale* as an attractive-repulsive fantasy which takes the form of vampire women in *Dracula*. As we shall see, this figure constitutes a first hint of the masculinisation of the sexual woman which takes place in Stoker's novel. But another sexual taboo made an even deeper impression on Victorian minds when it came to be exposed in the press through the trials of Oscar Wilde, namely homosexuality. The end of this chapter is devoted to showing that the rampant homo-eroticism which pervades *Dracula* owes much to this over-exposure of what was seen at the time as a deviant form of sexuality, as well as to the traumatic effect it had on the author of the novel under study in particular.

[34] Freud, *op. cit.*, pp. 34-35.

2.1. The Byronic Vampire in Count Dracula

> *Now the serpent was more subtil than any beast of the field which the Lord God had made.*
>
> *Genesis 3:1*

a) Continuity and Changes: Fictional and Folkloric Vampire

In his article on vampirism, Gary L. Green asserts:

> Bram Stoker's *Dracula* is without doubt the boldest and most comprehensive treatment of vampirism. Count Dracula encompasses every characteristic of the vampire that had been established up to that time, while embodying new ones as well.[35]

As literary figures, it is certainly true that Count Dracula and his female companions draw heavily on the Romantic tradition in particular. In this sense, we shall see presently that the novel's representation of female vampires as *femmes fatales* is largely inspired by Romantic poetry and its treatment of the mythological Lamia, but the first part of this chapter will concentrate on Count Dracula himself and his obvious connection with the Byronic hero. Nevertheless, the purpose of the following pages will be to show that Stoker did not only create one more Byronic vampire after the manner of John Polidori for instance, but that, by giving more substance to the outline previous authors had drawn, he brought into being the quintessential Byronic vampire. Eastern European folklore provided Stoker with the required elements to convey to his readers the sense of paradoxical attraction elicited by the vampire figure, and which, for that matter, surrounds any violation of taboos.

Although characters displaying the attributes of vampires do appear in very old texts such as the tales of the Arabian Nights, this mythological figure only began to be explored extensively in European literature from the end of the eighteenth century. According to Montague Summers, the literary vampire made its first famous appearance in Romantic poetry in Germany with Bürger's 'Lenore' (1773) and Goethe's 'Bride of Corinth' (1797)[36]. In their turn, English Romantics were inspired by the myth; Southey's 'Thalaba the Destroyer'

[35] Green, *op. cit.*, p. 1380.

[36] "It would be an exaggeration to say that the Vampire entered German literature with Goethe's famous ballad Die Braut von Korinth, but it would be difficult to over-estimate the influence and the popularity of this piece" (Montague Summers, *The Vampire: His Kith and Kin*, London, K. Paul Trench, Trubner, 1928, p. 274).

(1801), Coleridge's 'Christabel' (1816) and Keats's 'Lamia' (1820), to cite only some of the most famous, all present main characters exhibiting vampiristic features. However, the most significant influence Romantic poetry had on the character of Count Dracula is to be found in the figure of the Byronic hero created by Lord Byron himself in such poems as 'Manfred' (1817) and 'The Giaour' (1813). In fact, an explicit reference to vampirism appears in the latter poem:

> But first, on earth as Vampire sent,
> Thy corpse shall from its tomb be rent:
> Then ghastly haunt thy native place,
> And suck the blood of all thy race [...][37]

Nevertheless, it is highly probable that Stoker was not so much inspired directly by Byron's poem as by John Polidori's *The Vampyre: A Tale* (1819) which draws largely on the Byronic hero and on Byron's own personae. *The Vampyre*, first attributed to Lord Byron himself before being recognized as the work of the poet's physician, delineates in Lord Ruthven the first prose version of the aristocratic vampire which was soon to become an archetype. One can for instance think of Sir Francis Varney, eponymous hero of the penny dreadful *Varney the Vampire; or, The Feast of Blood* (1847) attributed either to Thomas Peckett Prest or to James Malcolm Rymer, which is one of the many sources of inspiration for Stoker's *Dracula*. In this regard, it is significant that Dracula himself is referred to as a count whereas Vlad the Impaler, the historical figure which inspired Dracula, bore the military title of voivode. At any rate, this choice on the part of Stoker undoubtedly sets Count Dracula in the tradition of the aristocratic vampire. This identification of the vampire with the aristocratic dandy is ultimately what made the creature appealing enough to make vampire stories connote with the themes of seduction and sexuality. In *The Vampyre*, Lord Ruthven's main activity throughout the tale is indeed to try and corrupt as many innocent girls and married women as he meets, first in London society and then in Italy, the first stop of the Grand Tour he undertakes with young Aubrey, the narrator of the story. He eventually seduces the latter's sister and kills her on their wedding night. At the same instant, Aubrey dies of madness and grief. As we shall see presently, this motif of attacking women to hurt the men who love them is also developed quite extensively in *Dracula*.

A literary archetype is in itself always a vague signifier, and is therefore destined to be

[37] George Gordon Byron, "The Giaour" (1813), *The Works of Lord Byron*, vol. III, ed. Ernest Hartley Coleridge, London and New York, John Murray and Charles Scribner's Sons, 1900, ll. 755 to 758.

redefined by each writer who chooses to use it in his fictional work. Thus, the Byronic vampire came to be developed in quite different ways. One main feature of the Byronic hero is its self-reproachfulness. In Byron's 'The Giaour', the vampire cannot help being a monster and loathes himself for it:

> There from thy daughter, sister, wife,
> At midnight drain the stream of life;
> Yet loathe the banquet which perforce
> Must feed thy livid living corpse [...][38]

Varney expresses the same idea distinctly when he confesses to his victim, Flora Bannerworth: "even I can now feel the pang of being what I am!"[39] This particular feature of the Byronic hero paved the way for such vampire characters as Lestat de Lioncourt in Anne Rice's *Vampire Chronicles* (1976-2003) or Edward Cullen in Stephenie Meyer's *Twilight* series (2005-2008) in contemporary young-adult vampire literature. However, other authors did not choose to dwell upon the remorseful feelings the vampire could possibly retain from his former humanity, but rather to give prominence to another important feature of the Byronic hero, namely his monstrosity, which is notably emphasized by his utter lack of sympathy for the rest of mankind. There is no trace of remorse on the part of Lord Ruthven in Polidori's *The Vampyre: A Tale*, and it is precisely this idea of the vampire's pitiless cruelty which is developed in Bram Stoker's *Dracula*. In order to enhance the monstrosity of Count Dracula, Stoker borrowed features from the folkloric vampire. As a native of the country which may rightly boast of the richest surviving folklore in Western Europe, it is not surprising that Stoker should resort to folklore in order to build up his supernatural story. Indeed, Harry Ludlam reports:

> [Stoker's mother's] story of the Banshee, the Irish fairy whose lament warned of approaching death, was only one of the country tales, from the naïve to bordering on the macabre, that young Bram heard at his mother's knee.[40]

Thus, as Clive Leatherdale remarks, the author "had the entire Gaelic tradition of folklore to call upon, for Ireland is one of the most superstition-ridden lands in Europe"[41]. In addition, Stoker was a staunch advocate of Cesare Lombroso's theory of criminal anthropology, as the

[38] *Ibid.*, ll. 759 to 762.
[39] Thomas Peckett Prest (?), *Varney the Vampire; or, The Feast of Blood* (1847) <http://www.gutenberg.org/etext/14833> Accessed January 26, 2010.
[40] Harry Ludlam, *A Biography of Bram Stoker, Creator of Dracula* (1962), London, New English Library, 1977, p. 15.
[41] Leatherdale, *op. cit.*, p. 76.

tribute he pays to him through Mina's analysis of Dracula suggests: “The Count is a criminal and of criminal type. Nordau and Lombroso would so classify him, and *qua* criminal he is of imperfectly formed mind” (p. 296). As a result, for the author of *Dracula*, moral monstrosity is necessarily reflected by physical monstrosity. Therefore, Count Dracula is made to assume certain physical traits of the folkloric vampire in order to appear more loathsome. In *Vampires, Burial, and Death*, Paul Barber warns the reader:

> I have found it necessary to distinguish repeatedly between the fictional and the folkloric vampire. […] The fictional vampire tends to be tall, thin, and sallow, the folkloric vampire is plump and ruddy, or dark in color.[42]

However, in *Dracula*, this distinction appears to be blurred as both descriptions apply to the Count. Indeed, the latter is depicted by all the characters who see him walking about as “a tall, thin man” (pp. 81, 155 and 247), but when Jonathan Harker sees him as he is lying in his coffin, his description is more akin to a portrait of the folkloric vampire:

> There lay the Count, but looking as if his youth had been half renewed, for the white hair and moustache were changed to dark iron-grey; the cheeks were fuller, and the white skin seemed ruby-red underneath; the mouth was redder than ever, for on the lips were gouts of fresh blood, which trickled from the corners of the mouth and ran over the chin and neck. Even the deep, burning eyes seemed set amongst swollen flesh, for the lids and pouches underneath were bloated. It seemed as if the whole awful creature were simply gorged with blood; he lay like a filthy leech, exhausted with his repletion. (p. 53)

One may rightly wonder how such a creature could possibly succeed in seducing anyone. Yet, in *Dracula*, the vampire's powers of seduction are undeniable, and the monstrosity which surround them only confirms the taboo aspect of physical attraction in a Victorian context. The vampire does not need to be handsome in order to attract his victims, for seduction is presented in *Dracula* as a frightening process by which the seduced are in fact attracted to the vampires through a kind of paranormal mesmerising power.

b) The Seductive Vampire

As stated in *The Norton Anthology of English Literature*, one of the main characteristics of the Byronic hero is that he “exerts an attraction on other characters that is

[42] Paul Barber, *Vampires, Burial, and Death: Folklore and Reality*, New Haven and London, Yale University Press, 1988, p. 4.

the more compelling because it involves their terror at his obliviousness to ordinary human concerns and values"[43]. Count Dracula and his three female companions indeed demonstrate such a seductive capacity, which takes the form of hypnotic powers in the novel, a fitting image for the period which witnessed the birth of psychoanalysis. At first sight, this idea that the characters who are attracted to the vampires are under some sort of hypnosis would seem to free them of guilt. However, the motif of the invitation which is an integral part of the myth of vampirism is uncommonly underscored in *Dracula*, and may be construed as a sign that the Victorian characters of the novel are not as innocent as they first appear to be.

Count Dracula and his companions are famously endowed with various supernatural powers. As mentioned before, they have shape-shifting powers, but the Count also displays superhuman force ("his hand grasped mine with a strength which made me wince," p. 21), can command the elements and animals ("he can, within his range, direct the elements: the storm, the fog, the thunder; he can command all the meaner things: the rat, and the owl, and the bat–the moth, and the fox, and the wolf," p. 209), and, last but not least, all the vampires in the novel manifest a preternatural power of attraction on human beings. Thus, when Mina relates Dracula's dreadful attack on her own person, she asserts: "I was bewildered, and, strangely enough, I did not want to hinder him. I suppose it is a part of the horrible curse that such is, when his touch is on his victim" (p. 251). For his part, her husband, Jonathan Harker, describes the similar experience he has had with the three female vampires in Castle Dracula in the following words: "There was a deliberate voluptuousness that was both thrilling and repulsive" (p. 42). The seductive properties of the fictional vampire were of course not invented by Stoker, and the very words used by the seduced actually betray the influence of another vampire story written by a fellow Irishman, namely Sheridan Le Fanu's *Carmilla* (1872). Indeed, Carmilla's victim, Laura, admits: "I did feel, as [Carmilla] said, 'drawn towards her,' but there was also something of repulsion. In this ambiguous feeling, however, the sense of attraction immensely prevailed"[44]. She adds later on: "Her murmured words sounded like a lullaby in my ear, and soothed my resistance into a *trance*, from which I only seemed to recover myself when she withdrew her arms"[45]. Significantly, Van Helsing also uses terms endowed with psychological connotations to describe the state in which they find

[43] *The Norton Anthology of English Literature*, ed. Stephen Greenblatt et. al., 8th ed., vol. 2, New York and London, W. W. Norton & Co., 2006, p. 608.
[44] Joseph Sheridan Le Fanu, *Carmilla* (1872), London, Prime Classics Library, 2005, pp. 28-29.
[45] *Ibid.*, p. 33, emphasis mine.

Harker while his wife is being attacked by Dracula: “Jonathan is in a *stupor* such as we know the Vampire can produce” (p. 247, emphasis mine). Later on, when he is about to destroy the three sleeping female vampires, the professor delineates their power of attraction in more precise terms:

> Ah, I doubt not that in old time, when such things were, many a man who set forth to do such a task as mine, found at the last his heart failing him, and then his nerve. So he delay, and delay, and delay, till the mere beauty and the fascination of the wanton Un-dead have *hypnotize* him. (p. 319, emphasis mine)

Although antecedents can be found in previous literary works, this reference to hypnotic powers is quite meaningful in a novel written in the last decade of the nineteenth century. As Ken Gelder points out: “The novel was in fact published two years after Freud and Breuer's *Studies on Hysteria* (1895) and one year after the term 'psychoanalysis' was actually introduced”[46]. Even though Van Helsing also makes use of hypnosis to try and locate Count Dracula through the latter's telepathic connection with his victim Mina, the vampires' being attributed hypnotic powers reveals the ambivalent reaction of late Victorians to the new science of psychoanalysis. It seems that Stoker was fascinated by hypnosis, and more particularly by the evil influence it may have on the mesmerised person, for he would take up the theme in two later novels, *The Jewel of Seven Stars* (1903) and *The Lair of the White Worm* (1911). In both novels, hypnosis is used with a view to making the mesmerised person helpless in order to facilitate an attack. Similarly, Dracula and the three female vampires' use of hypnosis to make their victims helpless while they are attacking them is a clear sign that the methods introduced by Freud and his fellow physicians of the psychoanalytic school were received with ambivalent feelings. Although they were considered by some as significant medical advances, to others, they appeared as worrying evidence that the human mind may be easily manipulated by another human agency whose purpose might not be well-intentioned.

Although the victims' utter lack of free will at the moment of the attack makes them appear guiltless, some clues may induce the reader to question the seemingly innocent part which is played by the Victorian characters of the novel in the seduction game initiated by the vampires. Indeed, in *Dracula*, the trope of the seductive vampire seems designed to hint at the propensity of the supposed victims to be seduced. In Bram Stoker's working notes can be found among Count Dracula's main characteristics as listed by Christopher Frayling: “must be

[46] Gelder, *op. cit.*, p. 66.

carried, led, helped, or in some way welcomed over the threshold"[47]. Accordingly, Count Dracula finds himself unable to attack Lucy Westenra until he manages to make her go out of her house at night, using her sleepwalking for this purpose. However, later on, although it is not mentioned explicitly, the reader is made to understand that, in the absence of Mina who usually watches over her, Lucy herself opens her window in order to enable the Count to reach her as, when Mina comes back, she finds her friend "with her head lying up against the side of the window-sill […] and by her, seated on the window-sill, was something that looked like a good-sized bird" (p. 91). In this case, the invitation is clearly presented to the vampire by Lucy herself. In a kind of ironical reversal of this trope, Dracula's first words when he welcomes Jonathan Harker to his castle ("Welcome to my house! Enter freely and of your own will!" p. 22) make it clear that the young man will be deemed responsible for his future fate as he accepts the invitation without being forced to do so. This stress on a shared responsibility between the evil being and its victim echoes the words of another tempter, namely Mephistopheles in Goethe's *Faust*. When Faust invites him into his room by telling him to "come in," Mephistopheles answers "Thrice must the words be spoken,"[48] suggesting thereby that the decision to let him in has been well considered. This pattern thus nullifies the image of the innocent victim, highlighting on the contrary human beings' propensity to be seduced and corrupted. Carol A. Senf expresses this idea clearly:

> the vampire cannot enter a dwelling unless he is first invited by one of the inhabitants. In other words, a vampire cannot influence a human being without that person's consent. Dracula's behavior confirms that he is an internal, not an external threat.[49]

It is man's own weakness which makes him a potential victim to the seductive vampire, a truth which was not often articulated explicitly in a Victorian society intent on promoting chastity as the basis of a healthy society. Indeed, had not vampiric imagery been used in order to express metaphorically the sexual content of the novel, *Dracula* would most certainly have been censored under the Obscene Publications Act 1857, one of the most effective ways the Victorians found to elude the discursive taboo of carnal attraction by actually making any mention of it illegal.

[47] Bram Stoker, qtd. in Frayling, *op. cit.*, p. 308.
[48] Johann Wolfgang von Goethe, *Faust: A Dramatic Poem* (1808), Edinburgh and London, William Blackwood & Sons, 1877, p. 71.
[49] Senf, *op. cit.*, p. 427.

c) Taming Men Through Their Women

In *Dracula*, the Count plainly takes advantage of human weaknesses in order to subdue his intended victims. Although the vampire does not exhibit any kind of sentimental feelings himself, he seems to understand well that the best way to subjugate men is to use the women they love as baits to attract and destroy them. The inhumanity of this method is enhanced by the obvious parallel which can be noticed in the novel between the way animals are tamed through the use of food, and Dracula's use of women as lures to entice men. In this regard, one may wonder what this parallel reveals about the relationship between men and women in late Victorian Britain. Indeed, this allegorical pattern can be construed as a re-enactment of the Fall of Man as told in Genesis, ascribing thereby the role of temptresses to the Victorian female characters of the novel.

The theme of taming is surprisingly prominent in *Dracula*. Indeed, among the Count's numerous supernatural powers is an extraordinary ability to tame animals. Jonathan Harker first witnesses his skill when Dracula—whom, at this point of the story, both Harker and the reader only know as the mysterious driver of the calèche which is to convey the young man to Castle Dracula—manages to calm down the terrified horses as they are surrounded by wolves:

> He petted and soothed them, and whispered something in their ears, as I have heard of horse-tamers doing, and with extraordinary effect, for under his caresses they became quite manageable again, though they still trembled. (pp. 18-19)

Incidentally, this excerpt echoes Count Dracula's hypnotic power over human beings mentioned above, which suggests that the vampire deals with humans pretty much in the same manner as he does with animals. However, the bait of choice in order to attract and subdue animals in the novel appears to be food. The most explicit instance of this can be found in Renfield's treatment of his “pets” which was previously mentioned in the first chapter of this work. Dr. Seward describes his patient's actions as follows: “[Renfield] has managed to get a sparrow, and has already partially tamed it. His means of taming is simple, for already the spiders have diminished” (p. 70). However, this is not the only reference which is made to taming through food in the novel. One of the secondary characters, a zoo-keeper, explains to the journalist who is interviewing him about the escape of a wolf from the zoo: “I waits till they've 'ad their sherry and kawffee, so to speak, afore I tries on with the ear-scratchin'. […] there's a deal of the same nature in us as in them theer animiles.” (p. 125) Although these

words are spoken by a minor character, the second part of the statement is quite ominous: it foreshadows Dracula's manner of proceeding in order to subdue men. The Count seems to have realised that men's "sherry and kawffee" are the women they love, and he is determined to use the latter in order to achieve their destruction.

It is quite remarkable that, in the novel, Count Dracula is seen assaulting only women, but never attacking men. Indeed, the latter are clearly in danger only in the presence of female vampires, for Dracula invariably flees when he is brought face to face with the Victorian men who have pledged to destroy him. However, an explanation for this behaviour is provided when the Count is confronted to these men for the second time, as he then articulates quite clearly his strategy to subjugate humanity in its entirety before escaping: "Your girls that you love are mine already; and through them you and others shall yet be mine" (p. 267). At this point of the story, the scene preceding Lucy's second death, i.e. the destruction of vampire Lucy, has in fact already confirmed the truth of this statement. Indeed, had Van Helsing failed to intervene, Lucy's fiancé, Arthur Holmwood, would have given in to the vampire's advances:

> "Come to me, Arthur. Leave these others and come to me. My arms are hungry for you. Come, and we can rest together. Come, my husband, come!"
> There was something diabolically sweet in her tones–something of the tingling of glass when struck–which rang through the brains even of us who heard the words addressed to another person. As for Arthur, he seemed under a spell; moving his hands from his face, he opened wide his arms. She was leaping for them, when Van Helsing sprang forward and held between them his little golden crucifix. (p. 188)

Despite all he knows about Dracula, Jonathan Harker cannot help falling into the same trap after his wife, Mina, has been attacked by the Count:

> To one thing I have made up my mind; if we find out that Mina must be a vampire in the end, then she will not go into that unknown and terrible land alone. I suppose it is thus that in old times one vampire meant many; just as their hideous bodies could only rest in sacred earth, so the holiest love was the recruiting sergeant for their ghastly ranks. (pp. 259-260)

In this regard, it is quite significant that Mina went from being Harker's sister in Stoker's early working notes[50] to becoming his wife in the finished novel, as it underscores the idea of sexual

[50] "The Mina Harker character was at this stage [spring 1890] to be the young lawyer's 'shrewd, sceptical sister'" (Frayling, *op. cit.*, p. 305).

rivalry between Dracula and the men who fight against him. Although Harker uses the term "love," what shows through the previous extract involving Holmwood and the vampire Lucy is indeed more akin to physical attraction than to purely sentimental feelings. In fact, this triangular pattern mirrors the episode of the Fall of Man as told in the Bible, with Dracula playing the role of the serpent–his reptilian features discussed in the first chapter are quite enlightening in this regard–and the women taking on the role of temptresses. Although Stoker enjoyed quite a chivalric reputation[51], the author of *Dracula* evidently shared the misogynistic views of many of his contemporaries, in which woman was seen as a temptress luring man into sin, unless she redeemed herself and her lover by being his devoted wife and the mother of his children. As a consequence, in a highly religious Victorian society, female sexuality became taboo, representing both the sacred origin of life and the enticement to carnal sin at once. For Clive Leatherdale, "from St Paul onwards women were accused as the temptresses of men"[52], but this view seemed indeed to gain particular prominence in a Victorian age obsessed with chastity. As early as 1836, in "La morte amoureuse" by French writer Théophile Gautier, priest Romuald warns his reader that the simple act of looking at a woman can be dangerous to the point of leading a man to lifelong unrest.[53] In fact, fascination with taboo female sexuality pervades the works of many writers of the Victorian period, and is most often conveyed through *femme fatale* characters, as is the case in *Dracula*. This mythological and fictional archetype will therefore be the focus of the following pages.

[51] The following anecdote related by Daniel Farson is an example of Stoker's chivalrous attitude towards women: "[At the Lyceum Theatre] there was always the threat of fire and one evening this was realised when a lighted torch set fire to a drapery. A stage-hand trampled out the flames but one unfortunate young man in the audience rose in panic and started to dash up the aisle. Bram seized him by the throat and flung him to the floor. 'Go back to your seat sir!' he thundered as he dragged the man to his feet. 'It is cowards like you who cause death to helpless women'" (Daniel Farson, *The Man Who Wrote* Dracula*: A Biography of Bram Stoker*, London, Michael Joseph, 1975, p. 58).

[52] Leatherdale, *op. cit.*, p. 133.

[53] "O frère, méditez bien ceci ! Pour avoir levé une seule fois le regard sur une femme, pour une faute en apparence si légère, j'ai éprouvé pendant plusieurs années les plus misérables agitations : ma vie a été troublée à tout jamais" (Théophile Gautier, "La morte amoureuse" (1836), *Contes Fantastiques*, Paris, José Corti, 1974, p. 94).

2.2. Unconventional Sexuality and Gender Questions in *Dracula*

Gender was an unstable category at the fin-de-siècle...

Sally Ledger, The New Woman: Fiction and Feminism at the *Fin-de-Siècle*

a) The Figure of the Femme Fatale

Taboo sexuality has become a cliché characteristic of the Victorian era in contemporary minds, and is thus often exaggerated. Joan Perkin remarks that, in nineteenth-century Britain, "sexual activity did not decline, but nor was it talked or written about"[54]. This statement needs to be further qualified, as it would be more accurate to say that sexuality was not written about explicitly. Indeed, many nineteenth-century authors, particularly at the *fin-de-siècle*, tackled the issue of sexuality by using metaphors. Bram Stoker was undeniably one of them, as sexuality is not mentioned once in *Dracula*, yet it clearly underlies the whole imagery of the novel. As Ken Gelder expresses: "*Dracula* overcodes sexuality at the level of performance, but undercodes it at the level of utterance"[55]. Both in folklore and in literature, the act of vampirism has often been assimilated with the sexual act. It is therefore no wonder that the female vampires in *Dracula* should merge with the archetypal literary representation of the sexual woman, i.e. the *femme fatale*.

In his biography of Bram Stoker, Daniel Farson declares:

> I doubt if Bram realised the homosexual implications of Whitman's concept of idyllic boy-love, I doubt if he recognised the lesbianism in *Carmilla*, the novel that was to influence him so deeply; and I am sure he was unaware of the sexuality inherent in *Dracula*.[56]

While it is always venturesome to write about an author's intentions with such certainty, it is certainly tempting to believe that the strong sexual component of the novel was not entirely premeditated. Indeed, Bram Stoker was himself an advocate of censorship, expressing in "The Censorship of Fiction" (1908) his view that "the only emotions which in the long run harm

[54] Joan Perkin, *Victorian Women*, London, John Murray, 1993, p. 52.
[55] Gelder, *op. cit.*, p. 67.
[56] Farson, *op. cit.*, p. 22.

are those arising from sex impulses,"[57] and that "if no other adequate way can be found, and if the plague-spot continues to enlarge, a censorship there must be"[58]. Therefore, it is unlikely that Stoker was conscious of the intensity of the eroticism which his vampire story conveyed. In fact, with the benefit of hindsight, it seems inevitable that the incomprehension felt by Victorian men as regards female sexuality should appear in the literary texts of the period, whether the author himself was aware of it or not. This incomprehension originated essentially from the discrepancy between the official discourse on female sexuality, and what men experienced privately. Joan Perkin explains that "an ideology about women emerged in the 1840s and 50s which virtually denied women's sexuality"[59]. One of the advocates of this theory was British expert on venereal disease William Acton, who expresses in *The Functions and Disorders of the Reproductive Organs* (1857) his opinion that "a majority of women (happily for society) are not very much troubled with sexual feeling of any kind"[60]. In *Dracula*, it would seem that Jonathan Harker shares this view on women, as he refutes the womanhood of the sexually active female vampires: "I am alone in the castle with those awful women. Faugh! Mina is a woman, and there is nought in common" (p. 55). It is important to note that, at this point of the story, Harker and Mina are yet to be married; therefore, Jonathan cannot see the sexual being in his fiancée, having of her only the image of a virtuous virgin. However, what men experienced through premarital intercourse with women euphemistically referred to as courtesans at the time, as well as through marital intercourse itself, was quite different from the official discourse. By the end of the century, the fact that most women did obviously feel carnal pleasure had to be accounted for, and an explanation was provided by the proponents of the discourse of degeneration. In *Idols of Perversity*, Bram Dijkstra relates that, as stories of sexual vampirism were spreading,

> [woman's] blood lust was thought to be precipitated by her insatiable need to replenish the blood incessantly lost to her system as a result of her degenerative subjection to the reproduction function and its attendant sexual cravings.[61]

In brief, if woman was not pure, her body itself and its fundamental differences with that of

[57] Bram Stoker, "The Censorship of Fiction" (1908), *Dracula*, Maurice Hindle, ed., Harmondsworth, Penguin, 2003, p. 425.
[58] *Ibid.*, p. 429.
[59] Perkin, *op. cit.*, p. 64.
[60] *Victorian Women: A Documentary Account of Women's Lives in Nineteenth-Century England, France and The United States*, Erna Olafson Hellerstein, Leslie Parker Hume and Karen M. Offen, Brighton, ed., Harvester Press, 1981, p. 177.
[61] Bram Dijkstra, *Idols of Perversity: Fantasies of Feminine Evil in Fin-de-Siècle Culture*, Oxford, Oxford University Press, 1986, p. 334.

man, should be blamed for it. This anxiety about female sexuality found its embodiment in nineteenth-century European literature in the figure of the *femme fatale*.

Although the name it bears is not as ancient as the figure itself, the *femme fatale* was an already old mythological figure when it became a prominent literary archetype in nineteenth-century European literature. Greek mythology has its Lamia and other Sirens, Christian medieval folkore its succubi, and Irish folklore its Dearg-due, literally the "red bloodsucker" who, according to Clive Leatherdale, is "reputed to use her beauty to tempt passing men and then suck their blood"[62]. As is evident in this last example, the figures of the vampire woman and the *femme fatale* often tend to overlap, for they share two major attributes: their murderous intent, and the use of their seductive powers to attain their aim. Although it is commonly believed that the sexual vampire was invented in fiction, vampire folklore also contains a strong sexual component according to Paul Barber:

> It is generally believed that one of 'the wild signs' (*wilde Zeichen*) imply that the corpse was believed to have an erection. The vampire of folklore is a sexual creature, and his sexuality is obsessive−indeed, in Yugoslavia, when he is not sucking blood, he is apt to wear out his widow with his attentions, so that she pines away, much like his other victims.[63]

Vampirism thus proved to be a particularly appropriate image to imply the sexual act in literature. In this sense, Howard L. Malchow remarks that "the overt sexuality of the vampire story has always been obvious, with the exchange of blood as metaphor for sexual intercourse"[64]. As a consequence, a number of nineteenth-century fictional *femmes fatales* are explicitly referred to as vampires; one can cite for instance Clarimonde in Théophile Gautier's "La morte amoureuse" (1836) or the unnamed vampire woman in Charles Baudelaire's "Les métamorphoses du vampire" (1857). In this regard, the vampire women in *Dracula* undoubtedly share many traits with such female characters. Significantly, Mina Harker becomes increasingly attractive as she is gradually changing into a vampire; Van Helsing writes that she is "more charming than ever" (p. 316). Moreover, the ambivalent feeling which Jonathan Harker experiences in the presence of the three vampire women in Castle Dracula also throws light upon the female vampires' affinity to the *femme fatale*. Harker expresses this feeling in the following words: "There was something about them that made me uneasy, some longing and at the same time some deadly fear" (p. 42). We have already seen

[62] Leatherdale, *op. cit.*, p. 77.
[63] Barber, *op. cit.*, p. 9.
[64] Howard L. Malchow, *Gothic Images of Race in Nineteenth-Century Britain*, Stanford, Stanford University Press, 1996, p. 129.

that Carmilla–another famous vampire-*femme fatale*–induces the same feeling in her victim. This paradoxical feeling combining attraction and repulsion at once can also be felt in the following line from Keats's 'Lamia' (1819): "Her head was serpent, but ah, *bitter-sweet*!"[65] The female vampires in *Dracula* thus draw undoubtedly on the long tradition of the *femme fatale*, presenting female sexuality both as something attractive and something repulsive, or expressed in terms of taboo, both as something sacred and something to be shunned.

b) The Masculinisation of the Sexual Woman

One of the main characteristics of the *femme fatale*, which is developed extensively in *Dracula*, is the active role she invariable plays in the sexual intercourse. In Stoker's novel, this pattern inscribes itself in a wider pattern of gender inversion, and contributes to the masculinisation of women taking place in the scenes imbued with erotic imagery. Indeed, it represents a reversal of Victorian conventional sexual roles, and the vampire women of the novel eventually pay the price for subverting the established order.

In her article "Suddenly Sexual Women in *Dracula*", Phyllis A. Roth remarks:

> While it is true that the reader may often think of Dracula as the active partner, the fact is that the scenes of vampire sexuality are described from the male perspective, with the females as the active assailants.[66]

This assertion is confirmed by vampire Lucy's assuming the role of the seducer while her fiancé, Arthur Holmwood, is being passively seduced, as was demonstrated above. However, the active role of the vampire women is most evident in Jonathan Harker's encounter with the three female vampires in Castle Dracula. This scene is by far the most erotically charged moment in the whole novel, as Harker's following comment to be found in the midst of his narrative implies: "It is not good to note this down, lest some day it should meet Mina's eyes and cause her pain; but it is the truth" (p. 42). Recounting the scene in his diary, Harker admits: "I felt in my heart a wicked, burning desire that they would kiss me with those red lips" (p. 42). Here, the active role of the vampire women is enhanced by what Christopher Craft referred to as Harker's "'feminine' passivity"[67]. Craft's remark is based on a

[65] John Keats, "Lamia" (1819) in Greenblatt, *op. cit.*, l. 59, emphasis mine.
[66] Phyllis A. Roth, "Suddenly Sexual Women in *Dracula*" (1977), *Dracula*, Norton Critical Edition, p. 419.
[67] Christopher Craft, "'Kiss Me with Those Red Lips': Gender and Inversion in Bram Stoker's *Dracula*" (1984), *Dracula*, Norton Critical Edition, p. 445.

consciousness that this pattern obviously stands as an inversion of the Victorian normative conception of sexual intercourse. Indeed, in his influential book *Psychopathia Sexualis* (1886), an extract of which can be found in Frayling's *Lord Byron to Count Dracula*, nineteenth-century sexologist Richard von Krafft-Ebing explains that "in the intercourse of the sexes, the active or aggressive role belongs to man; woman remains passive, defensive"[68]. Therefore, not only does *Dracula* embody through vampire women a New Woman which represents a threat to a stable society, but also one who upsets the most intimate interactions between men and women. According to Sally Ledger, the alleged sexual deviancy of the New Woman actually featured in the satirical portraits of this figure drawn by the press of the period. Indeed, commenting on Mina's taunt "I believe we should have shocked the New Woman with our appetites" (p. 86), Ledger remarks:

> The reference to New Women ironically prefigures the fact that shortly after this scene Lucy goes on to develop 'appetites' of an altogether more wanton kind than those indulged at tea-time; decadent sexual appetites associated in the periodical press of the 1890s with one particular construction of the New Woman.[69]

The inversion of sexual roles in *Dracula* thus reflects a substantial anxiety of late Victorian Britain, namely that of the sexually active woman which was seen almost as masculine, as opposed to the image of the innocent infantilised woman which male Victorian imagination had created.

As one would expect, the vampire women in *Dracula* do not enjoy the masculine privilege of presiding over the erotic encounters with their Victorian acquaintances for long. Count Dracula's three female companions are staked by Van Helsing just before Dracula finds himself surrounded, while vampire Lucy has been taken care of in the same manner long before. The phallic symbolism of the act of staking is obvious enough and has been drawn attention to by a number of critics. Nonetheless, the scene of Lucy's staking is worth dwelling upon, for the phallic imagery it conveys is so evident that it is quite baffling coming from a writer who was in favour of censorship. Seward depicts the scene as follows:

> The Thing in the coffin writhed; and a hideous, blood-curdling screech came from the opened red lips. The body shook and quivered and twisted in wild contortions; the sharp white teeth champed together till the lips were cut, and the mouth was smeared with a crimson foam. But Arthur never faltered. He looked like a figure of Thor as his untrembling

[68] Richard von Krafft-Ebing, qtd. in Frayling, *op. cit.*, p. 392.
[69] Ledger, *op. cit.*, p. 102.

> arm rose and fell, driving deeper and deeper the mercy-bearing stake, whilst the blood from the pierced heart welled and spurted up around it. (p. 192)

The first important element to be observed in this extract is the dehumanisation of vampire– and thus sexually active–Lucy; she is no longer a woman but a "Thing." The second is of course the overmasculinisation of Arthur Holmwood as he is driving the stake through her body. The reference to Thor, who is the god of thunder in Germanic mythology, illustrates quite well the idea of masculine power. In this scene, Lucy Westenra is thus punished by her fiancé, not only for wishing she could accept all the worthy men who have proposed to her during her lifetime, but above all for having usurped the active role of the dominating male in the seduction scene we referred to earlier. Therefore, Lucy's staking can be construed as the man's reappropriation of his active role in the sexual intercourse, restoring woman to the traditional passive role which defined her in the Victorian era. There is no place for the masculinised sexualised woman either in Victorian society or in *Dracula*, and, accordingly, the only woman who eventually survives in the novel is Mina Harker, who has remained faithful to her husband to the end and is ready to fulfil her gender's destiny to produce a son and heir. Nevertheless, at the *fin-de-siècle*, the gender question was not only a concern pertaining to what was referred to at the time as "the woman question," but during and after the 1895 Wilde Trials, it became also closely connected with homosexuality.

c) Homo-Eroticism in Dracula

The trials of Oscar Wilde took place while Bram Stoker was working hard on *Dracula* and, as a result, the controversy had a strong impact on the representation of gender in the novel. As Nina Auerbach and David J. Skal express in their preface to the novel:

> The Wilde Trials of 1895 probably shocked Stoker intro writing *Dracula* as we know it, for Wilde's two-year imprisonment for 'acts of gross indecency' gave Victorian England a new monster of its own clinical making: the homosexual. (p. XI)

This becomes quite obvious in the scenes of vampirism, which stand as metaphors for sexual intercourse, in particular when it comes to Jonathan Harker's experience with the three vampire women in Castle Dracula. But before examining them, it is essential to explain why the Wilde Trials did have such a strong effect on Bram Stoker's writing. Autobiographical information about Stoker, and particularly that which is brought to light in *Personal*

Reminiscences of Henry Irving (1906), Stoker's biography of his long-time friend, proves to be of special interest in this regard, for the author of *Dracula* was himself quite representative of late nineteenth-century Victorian men, in whose minds the Wilde scandal raised questions about their relationships with their fellow men.

Although they were not very close friends, autobiographical evidence reveals that Bram Stoker and Oscar Wilde certainly knew each other. Not only had Wilde been one of Florence Balcombe's suitors before Stoker married her in 1878, but according to Daniel Farson, Stoker also visited Wilde's parents quite regularly while he lived in Dublin, being "a favourite of Sir William and Lady Wilde"[70]. However, it is not so much the fact that he knew Oscar Wilde personally as the relationship he himself entertained with his closer male friends which engendered Stoker's strong reaction to the Wilde Trials. Howard L. Malchow makes a very good point on the question, putting an end to any enticement to draw hasty conclusions:

> The argument here is not that Stoker was homosexual, but that his homosocial relationships were of an intensity that may have been troubling and certainly encouraged him to compensate with […] a degree of homophobic coding in the construction of his most famous literary creation, Count Dracula.[71]

In particular, Stoker's relationship with actor Henry Irving–who inspired Count Dracula's dramatic gestures and cues which would be highly emphasized by Bela Lugosi's acting in Tod Browning's *Dracula* (1931)–indeed appears to have been considerably intense. In his *Personal Reminiscences of Henry Irving*, Stoker relates how their friendship started when he burst into hysterics after hearing Irving give a powerful reading of Thomas Hood's *Dream of Eugene Aram*. Not only were hysterics considered as a feminine pathological reaction–as Dr. Seward's reaction to Van Helsing's fit of hysterics after Lucy's funeral indicates ("I tried to be stern with him, as one is to a woman under the circumstances," p. 157)–but the very terms Stoker himself employs in *Reminiscences* are quite perplexing. Referring to the signed photograph Irving gave him immediately after the reading, the author of *Dracula* remarks: "The sight of his picture before me […] *unmans* me once again as I write"[72]. The implication here is that a man could not entertain such feelings towards another man, hence the use of the image of castration. Nonetheless, notwithstanding Bram Stoker's use of unusually strong terms to describe his friendship with Irving, their relationship should not be considered as an

[70] Farson, *op. cit.*, p. 39.
[71] Malchow, *op. cit.*, p. 132.
[72] Bram Stoker, *Personal Reminiscences of Henry Irving* (1906), London, William Heinemann, 1907, p. 21, emphasis mine.

exception. Indeed, in an age when women were regarded as the "angels of the house," male Victorians spent much more time with their male friends in men's clubs than with their own spouses. As a result, strong friendships were likely to develop between men. Before the revelations brought about by the Wilde Trials, Oscar Wilde and Bosie were only perceived as one of these inseparable duets which one always saw together at the club. Thus, the Trials probably induced many Victorian men to wonder about the nature of their own same-sex friendships, and even more importantly to wonder about what other men perceived of these relationships. In a normative age in which mere suspicion could end up in one's being cast out of society without delay, late Victorian men were eager to prove that Oscar Wilde was an isolated case, representing him as some sort of monster which had nothing to do with themselves whatsoever. Stoker's *Dracula* is without doubt one of these late Victorian attempts to represent homosexuality as horrifying abnormality.

Indeed, the inversion of conventional sexual roles which the act of vampirism epitomizes in *Dracula* does not only betray an anxiety brought about by the taboo of female sexuality in late Victorian Britain, but it also foregrounds the fear of an alternative form of male sexuality. Commenting on Jonathan Harker's encounter with the three vampire women, Christopher Craft notes that the young man who, in his own words, "lay quiet […] in an agony of delightful anticipation" (p. 42) "awaits a delicious penetration from a woman"[73]. For Craft, this scene is thus "the text's most direct and explicit representation of a male's desire to be penetrated"[74]. This episode, which is thus imbued with homoerotic connotations, climaxes with Dracula's intervention and his assertion: "This man belongs to me!" (p. 43) When the fair-haired vampire woman who was on the point of biting Harker objects that he "never love[s]," the Count mysteriously answers: "Yes, I too can love; you yourselves can tell it from the past" (p. 43). Again, although the term "love" is used, in this scene pervaded by erotic imagery, the word is more likely to be a euphemistic reference to sexual intercourse than meant to express any propensity for sentimental feelings on the part of the Count. Dracula himself is thus presented in the novel as the central embodiment of a homosexual threat. The above highlighted idea that, although Dracula's victims are women, the Count's avowed aim is ultimately to subjugate men through them, is certainly in keeping with this interpretation. Significantly, when Harker risks his life to escape Castle Dracula despite its being surrounded by a precipice which is "steep and high," he expresses the opinion that "at its foot a man may

[73] Craft, *op. cit.*, p. 445.
[74] *Ibid.*, p. 447.

sleep–*as a man*" (p. 55, emphasis mine). Interestingly, the same expression recurs in the log of the Demeter, in which some of the captain's last words are: "It is better to die like a man" (p. 84). The insistence on manhood betrays the assumption that falling into Dracula's hands would entail both a symbolic castration and a metamorphosis into a monster deprived of humanity. Much has been made of common points which can be found between Count Dracula and Oscar Wilde as he was portrayed throughout his trials. For instance, Dracula does not have servants and neither did Wilde for the rooms he rented in which he entertained young men, and the "sickly odour" (p. 50) peculiar to the Count's resting places has been seen as reminiscent not only of death, but of excrements, pointing thereby to the traces of faeces found in Wilde's rooms during the inquest pertaining to the trial which found him guilty of "gross indecency." Nevertheless, Count Dracula should not be regarded as a literary embodiment of Oscar Wilde himself, but rather as the embodiment of the Victorian view of the homosexual as a threat to society. Talia Schaffer expresses this idea as follows: "Dracula is Wilde-as-threat, a complex cultural construction not to be confused with the historical individual Oscar Wilde"[75]. To a certain extent, *Dracula* is thus indicative of the deep impression the Wilde Trials made on Victorian minds, exposing a taboo form of relationship between men which had been labelled an aberration by Victorian society.

One of the aims of this chapter was to show how, in *Dracula*, Stoker's proficient use of mythological and fictional figures enables the novel to draw quite a comprehensive picture of the anxieties of the Victorian age as regards sexuality. Indeed, Dracula and his female companions do not only perpetuate the tradition of the literary vampire, but they actually reconcile the folkloric and the fictional versions of the vampire, thereby becoming more uncanny than their literary predecessors. Moreover, the vampire figures in *Dracula* also draw on other mythological and literary archetypes, such as the Byronic hero and the *femme fatale*, while linking them with contemporary questions, such as the masculinised New Woman and the Wilde Trials. The very possibility of expressing Victorian sexual taboos by drawing on myths and previous fictional works makes evident that these sexual taboos are not specific to the Victorian age, but that they already existed in one form or another in previous societies.

[75] Talia Scaffer, "'A Wilde Desire Took Me': The Homoerotic History of *Dracula*" (1994), *Dracula*, Norton Critical Edition, p. 472.

The mythological figure of the *femme fatale* for instance, whether it is called Lamia, Siren, succubi, Dearg-due or vampire, manifests the ancestral idea of female sexuality as something Other, something uncanny, something taboo. Nevertheless, the interaction between myth, fictional antecedents, and references to contemporary elements in *Dracula* clearly signals that, although not characteristic of the Victorian age only, sexual taboos were a major concern in this era, and that the specific forms they took during this period could only find their expression in some kind of hybrid literary figures testifying to both the universality of the theme, and its specificity to the Victorian age. One important notion underlay the sexual taboos under study in this chapter: a rejection of the unconventional. The representation of the sexual woman and of the homosexual as monsters in *Dracula* betrays the existence of strict standards on which Victorian society was grounded, as well as an underlying process of rejection of all individuals who would not meet these standards and who were thus perceived as Other.

3. Rejection of the Other and Xenophobia in Dracula

The notion of rejection is intricately linked with the notion of taboo. In *Totem and Taboo*, Freud explains that "[the] converse of 'taboo' in Polynesian is '*noa*', which means 'common' or 'generally accessible'. Thus taboo has about it a sense of something unapproachable"[76]. The rejection of the Other was an important phenomenon in a Victorian society which was extremely normative. At the *fin-de-siècle* in particular, in the context of the decaying empire, this phenomenon took the form of blatant xenophobia. Seemingly innocent remarks, such as Harker's observation that "the further East you go the more unpunctual are the trains. What ought they to be in China?" (p. 11), become in this regard so many instances of the xenophobic discourse conveyed by this novel in which the enemy comes precisely from the East. In fact, Howard L. Malchow expresses the idea that the recurrence of the metaphor of vampirism in late nineteenth-century British literature mirrors the general feeling entertained towards foreigners in the same period:

> It is no mere coincidence that there should have been a minor boom in sensational stories of supernatural and psychological vampirism in the troubled last third of the century, when the issues of "unfair" economic competition, immigration of the "unfit," and race degeneration featured prominently in both the sensational and the quality press.[77]

The first part of this chapter will concentrate on two mythological figures of rejection and their fictional variants which have left their imprint on the character of Count Dracula, namely Cain and the Wandering Jew. As an Irishman who spent most of his life in England, Stoker entertained ambivalent feelings towards the British view of foreigners and towards colonisation, an ambivalence which can be felt throughout the novel. In a part entitled "The Fear of (Reverse) Colonisation," we shall discuss the astonishing capacity of *Dracula* to epitomize at once the process of colonisation as seen through the eyes of the colonised, and

[76] Freud, *op. cit.*, p. 18.
[77] Malchow, *op. cit.*, p. 127.

the British *fin-de-siècle* fear of reverse colonisation. Dracula's military strategy of invasion is reminiscent of the systematic methods Britain employed to construct her empire, while the theme of contamination and the figure of the "Ghoul" pertaining to vampirism are indicative of the fear stemming from the weakness of the empire by the end of the nineteenth century. In this context, the struggle for power between the Victorian characters and the aristocratic Dracula comes to represent a struggle for power between two different races, as the theme of pure blood makes evident. However, this struggle eventually ends up revealing the constitutional otherness of Victorian society, thereby throwing light upon the condition of a society which is fighting against itself, and which is thus destined to wane.

3.1. Figures of Rejection

But a stranger in a strange land, he is no one...

Bram Stoker, Dracula

a) Dracula as the New Cain

The vampire is essentially a figure of rejection. Paul Barber explains that "[among] the revenant's functions is that of scapegoat for otherwise inexplicable phenomena"[78]. For Clive Leatherdale, the threat of vampirism was thus a natural development in "human societies [which] strove to induce conformity: anybody 'odd' in any way whatsoever was likely to be held responsible for whatever misfortunes befell a remote community"[79]. As a consequence, during the eighteenth century in particular, when the wave of mass hysteria about vampires spread across Europe, people exhibiting uncommon attributes, such as hare-lipped or epileptic people, were the most likely individuals to be suspected of vampirism.[80] The figure of the vampire is therefore quite appropriate to personify the individuals who would not fit in Victorian standards and would thus be rejected as Other. Interestingly enough, the contemporary imagination has linked the vampire to the archetypal figure of rejection: Cain.

[78] Barber, *op. cit.*, p. 85.
[79] Leatherdale, *op. cit.*, p. 28.
[80] *Ibid.*, p. 28.

The parallel has first been drawn in the *Dracula*-inspired role-playing game *Vampire: The Masquerade* created by Mark Rein·Hagen, which has had a strong influence on vampire literature and cinema in the past decades. A comparison between Count Dracula and Cain is thus necessary in order to demonstrate the relevance of this parallel in regard to the process of rejection which is outlined in *Dracula*.

In the prelude to the second edition of *Vampire: The Masquerade* which sets the background of the storytelling game, the fictitious narrator who is himself a vampire, explains:

> Outcast from mortal society for the killing of his brother, Caine was cursed with eternal life and a craving for blood. We, his children, are the heirs to that curse, condemned to repeat his crime endlessly.[81]

Caine, the obvious counterpart of Cain from Genesis, is therefore regarded as the very first vampire. The mysterious narrator relates that Caine and his "Progeny" are said to have survived the Flood and perpetuated their race to the present day.[82] In this regard, it is interesting to note that the episode of the curse of Cain in Genesis 4:11-24 is remarkably adaptable to the myth of vampirism. Indeed, the Bible itself does not record the death of Cain, nor that of any of his descendants to that matter, whereas the account of the lives and deaths of Adam's other descendants is quite thorough. Moreover, God's words to Cain "When thou tillest the ground, it shall not henceforth yield unto thee her strength" (Genesis 4:12) are consistent with the idea that the vampire does not partake of the food consumed by other human beings, as illustrated by Harker's remark in *Dracula*: "It is strange that as yet I have not seen the Count eat or drink" (p. 31). Evidence that Cain's offspring have perpetuated his crime is also present in the Bible as we are told that Lamech, one of his descendants, has confessed to have "slain a man to my wounding, and a young man to my hurt" (Genesis 4:23). Lastly, parallels can easily be drawn between Cain's murderous act and his resulting fate, and the vampire's actions, along with his status of accursed being. Cain was cursed for the killing of his brother, the vampire is cursed for drinking the blood of his fellow men; Cain usurped God's power of life and death over his brother, the vampire usurps Christ's power to confer immortality. The trope of the curse appears several times in *Dracula*, for instance when Harker calls Castle Dracula an "accursed place" (p. 39), and a "cursed spot" located in a

[81] Mark Rein·Hagen, *Vampire: The Masquerade* (1991), 2nd edition, Clarkston, White Wolf Publishing, 1997, p. 13.
[82] *Ibid.*, p. 13.

“cursed land” (p. 55). The vampires' vulnerability to religious objects which is developed extensively in *Dracula* confirms their condition of damned beings. Although Count Dracula is never explicitly compared to Cain in Stoker's novel, one clue alongside the common points between the figure of Cain and that of the vampire enumerated above may induce the reader to find a relation between the two figures. At one point, commenting on his connection with Count Dracula, Renfield declares: “If I may state my intellectual position I am, so far as concerns things purely terrestrial, somewhat in the position which Enoch occupied spiritually!” (p. 236) As the editors note, Renfield is probably referring to one of Adam's acknowledged descendants, the father of Methuselah who, like his son, is said to have lived several hundred years and to have “walked with God” (Genesis 5:22). At first glance, one can therefore conclude that Renfield is once again comparing Dracula to God and positioning himself as his follower. However, two characters named Enoch can be found in the Bible, and the second one is none other than Cain's son. Although the interpretation chosen by Nina Auerbach and David J. Skal is the most obvious and therefore the first to come to the reader's mind, this ambiguity should not be discarded, as the idea that the initiate of the accursed Dracula should compare himself to Cain's son does not sound incongruous by any means.

Count Dracula himself appears most blatantly as a figure of rejection in the tradition of Cain in the second half of the novel, when he is hunted down by the “Crew of Light,” as Christopher Craft calls the association of Victorian men dedicated to destroy the vampire.[83] In the Bible, Cain says to God:

> Behold, thou hast driven me out this day from the face of the earth; and from thy face shall I be hid; and I shall be a fugitive and a vagabond in the earth; and it shall come to pass, *that* every one that findeth me shall slay me. (Genesis 4:14)

This statement reflects quite fully Dracula's position in the last part of the novel as Van Helsing and his associates “make [their] final *coup*, and hunt the wretch to his real death” (p. 234). In this regard, it seems necessary to question Clive Leatherdale's assertion that “Stoker portrays [Dracula] as incarnate evil, without any redeeming features, someone deserving not the least vestige of sympathy”[84]. Indeed, on two occasions, Mina Harker expresses some pity towards the outcast Count. The first time, she dismisses the idea straight away:

[83] Craft, *op. cit.*, p. 445.
[84] Leatherdale, *op. cit.*, p. 110.

> I suppose one ought to pity any thing so hunted as is the Count. That is just it: this Thing is not human–not even beast. To read Dr Seward's account of poor Lucy's death, and what followed, is enough to dry up the springs of pity in one's heart. (p. 202)

Yet, as she is gradually changing into a vampire herself, she eventually stands up for the Count when her husband expresses his desire to "send [Dracula's] soul for ever and ever to burning hell," imploring the latter to be silent and to consider that "perhaps... some day... I, too, may need such pity; and […] some other like you–and with equal cause for anger–may deny it to me!" (p. 269) This plea for the outcast is a first hint of the ambivalence which imbues *Dracula* as regards the xenophobic discourse underlying the novel. As Joseph Valente reminds us,

> Stoker was not a standard issue middle-class Anglo-Irish Protestant, as has been almost universally imagined, but an inter ethnic Anglo-Celt and hence a member of a conquering and a conquered race, a ruling and a subject people, an imperial and an occupied nation.[85]

As an Irishman living in London, "a stranger in a strange land" (p. 26) as Count Dracula himself expresses, Bram Stoker certainly knew what it felt to be regarded as somewhat Other. Therefore, while this chapter shall lay bare the predominance of a xenophobic imperialist discourse in the novel, one should not forget the constant hints interspersed throughout the text suggesting an ambivalent position towards the prevalent discourse.

b) Count Dracula and the Figure of the Wandering Jew

God's curse on Cain to be "a fugitive and a vagabond on the earth" (Genesis 4:12) ties the biblical figure in with another mythological figure, namely that of the Wandering Jew. This figure became quite popular among nineteenth-century Gothic writers, several of whom made it the main anti-hero of their novels. Charles Maturin's *Melmoth the Wanderer*, which was mentioned earlier on, was probably the most famous literary adaptation of the myth at the time, but others came to be quite popular as well. One can cite for instance *Le Juif Errant* (1844) by French writer Eugène Sue, which Bram Stoker draws attention to in his chapter on the Wandering Jew in *Famous Impostors*. The following pages shall demonstrate that the character of Count Dracula owes much to those Gothic anti-heroes, as well as to the myth of the Wandering Jew in general. Furthermore, it shall appear that the assimilation of the

[85] Joseph Valente, *Dracula's Crypt: Bram Stoker, Irishness, and the Question of Blood,* Urbana and Chicago, University of Illinois Press, 2002, p. 4.

character of the Count with the mythical Wandering Jew in *Dracula* contributes to an anti-Semitic discourse which constitutes the bulk of the broader xenophobic discourse embedded in the novel.

The first fundamental trait Count Dracula shares with the Wandering Jew is his anti-Messianic character, which was discussed in the first chapter of this work. Indeed, originally, the mythological figure of the Wandering Jew was said to be an enemy of Christ:

> The true legend of the Wandering Jew, at the point where it becomes molded into recognizable shape, and without reference to the multitudinous variations of detail which it came to assume in posterity, is the tale of a man in Jerusalem, who, when Christ was carrying his Cross to Calvary and paused to rest for a moment on this man's doorstep, drove the Saviour away [...], crying aloud, "Walk faster!" And Christ replied, "I go, but you will walk until I come again!"[86]

Two ideas are implied in Christ's final words: the notion of wandering, and the concept of immortality, or at least of an indefinite lifespan. The latter idea seemed to have been of especial interest to Stoker, who notes in his *Famous Impostors* that "[the] legend of the Wandering Jew has its roots in a belief in the possibility of human longevity beyond what is natural and normal"[87]. This statement is obviously quite applicable to the figure of the vampire as well. In the realm of fiction, common points can also be found between the descriptions of Maturin's Melmoth and Stoker's Count Dracula. The reader is told of Melmoth that "he was never [...] seen to partake of food, or known to enter any dwelling but that of his family"[88]. As mentioned before, Count Dracula does not eat common food and cannot enter a house but his own if he has not been invited to do so in the first place. Furthermore, to relieve himself of his curse, Melmoth has to seduce another man into selling his soul to the Devil as an exchange to Melmoth's own soul. Therefore, the narrator explains:

> Of danger he was insensible, of fear he was unconscious; his miserable destiny had exempted him from both, but what had it left him? No hope–but that of plunging others into his own condemnation. No fear–but that his victim might escape him.[89]

Although Dracula has not struck any deal with the Devil, so to speak, his determination to transmit his own curse to other human beings constitutes another common trait with the

[86] George Kumler Anderson, *The Legend of the Wandering Jew*, Providence, Brown University Press, 1965, p. 11.
[87] Bram Stoker, *Famous Impostors*, London, Sidgwick and Jackson, 1910, p. 107.
[88] Charles Maturin, *Melmoth the Wanderer* (1820), Oxford, Oxford University Press, 1989, p. 30.
[89] *Ibid.*, p. 314.

character of Melmoth. What should be noticed from the diverse common points which have just been pointed out is that a number of the elements Count Dracula owes to the myth of the Wandering Jew are of an anti-Semitic nature, presenting the Jew as the enemy of Christ, and as a corrupting agent. In this regard, *Dracula* does not deviate from the typical racial discourse which pervades Victorian literature, using the figure of the Jew as an embodiment of the Other.

The character of Count Dracula is undeniably associated with the Jewish immigrant throughout the novel. For Howard L. Malchow, "[the] association of Dracula-as-immigrant with the eastern European Jew is strongly suggested in the Count's eastern European origin"[90]. The blatant anti-Semitism pervading the novel is most evident in the physical description not only of Dracula, but also of his evil associates. Indeed, their depictions undoubtedly draw on nineteenth-century caricature portraits of Jews. Jonathan Harker says of Hildesheim, one of the men employed by Dracula to help him get back to his castle, that he was "a Hebrew of rather the Adelphi Theatre type, with a nose like a sheep, and a fez" (p. 302). The Count's own physical appearance was famously inspired by actor Henry Irving's countenance when playing the part of Shylock, the Jewish moneylender in Shakespeare's *Merchant of Venice*. Praising Irving's make-up skills, Stoker wonders at the final effect the use of cosmetics produced on the actor's face in his *Personal Reminiscences of Henry Irving*:

> How the lips thickened, with the red of the lower lip curling out and over after the manner of the typical Hebraic countenance; how the bridge of the nose […] rose into the Jewish aquiline.[91]

This depiction is strikingly reminiscent of Harker's portrait of Dracula at the beginning of the novel: "[his] face was a strong–a very strong–aquiline, with high bridge of the thin nose and peculiarly arched nostrils" (p. 23). For David J. Skal,

> "Stoker's admission that he had Irving's Shylock in mind underscores the tacit anti-Semitism in Dracula's physical appearance, a Transylvanian variation on villainous literary Jews like Svengali and Fagin."[92]

Furthermore, the anti-Semitic stereotype of Jewish greed is also lengthily developed in *Dracula*. According to Jonathan Harker, Hildesheim's "arguments were pointed with specie–

[90] Malchow, *op. cit.*, p. 162.
[91] Stoker, *op. cit.*, pp. 89-90.
[92] David J. Skal, "'His Hour Upon the Stage': Theatrical Adaptations of *Dracula*" (1990), *Dracula*, Norton Critical Edition, p. 373.

we doing the punctuation−and with a little bargaining he told us what he knew" (p. 302). Similarly, Count Dracula is presented as a "hoarder of money and gold"[93]. Indeed, Harker finds a "heap of gold" in Dracula's room (p. 50), and when he attempts to stab the Count later on in the novel, "a bundle of bank-notes and a stream of gold" fall to the floor (p. 266). This stereotype is in fact also present in the myth of the Wandering Jew, who is renowned in folklore for his "ability […] to smell out treasure"[94]. The beginning of the novel actually suggests that Dracula possesses this ability, when Harker sees him, in the guise of the driver, marking the places where buried treasures are revealed by blue flames, a superstition Stoker came across in the course of his research in Gerard's "Transylvanian Superstitions" mentioned earlier. The character of Dracula is thus undoubtedly inspired by stereotypical anti-Semitic representations of the Jew. This particular focus on the character of the Jew within the larger xenophobic discourse illustrated by the novel is not simply a coincidence. As Malchow stresses:

> It is necessary to remind ourselves that Dracula immigrates to England and becomes the invisible threat within. It is reasonable to associate him, therefore, with the most tangible alien immigrant threat of the time, the eastern European Jew, rather than a more generalized and metaphoric image of the unspecific colonial "Other."[95]

Malchow also informs the reader that "[by] the turn of the century, almost 90 percent of Rumanian emigrants were Jewish"[96], suggesting that Dracula's wish to conquer England is in fact a metaphorical representation of a contemporary Victorian anxiety, namely the fear of reverse colonisation.

[93] Gelder, *op. cit.*, p. 14.
[94] Anderson, *op. cit.*, p. 27.
[95] Malchow, *op. cit.*, p. 162.
[96] *Ibid.*, p. 162.

3.2. The Fear of (Reverse) Colonisation

> *Vampirisation is colonisation—or rather, from the British perspective, reverse colonisation.*
>
> *Ken Gelder,* Reading the Vampire

a) Vampirism in Dracula: A Military Strategy of Invasion

The metaphor of vampirism as colonisation, or mainly as reverse colonisation from a late Victorian point of view, is remarkably foregrounded in *Dracula*. In his brilliant essay "The Occidental Tourist: *Dracula* and the Anxiety of Reverse Colonization," Stephen D. Arata notes:

> Victorian readers knew the Carpathians largely for its endemic cultural upheaval and its fostering of a dizzying succession of empires. By moving Castle Dracula there, Stoker gives distinctly political overtones to his Gothic narrative. In Stoker's version of the myth, vampires are intimately linked to military conquest and to the rise and fall of empires.[97]

This insistence on vampirism as military invasion in the novel is evident from the historical figure which inspired the name as well as the past of Count Dracula, Vlad III of Wallachia. Although the Count's inhumane determination to conquer can, to some extent, be construed as a criticism of British imperialism by Irish-born Stoker, his strategy consisting in blending into British society reflects more particularly the specific late Victorian fear of reverse colonisation by the colonial Other.

At the beginning of the novel, the reader learns that, in preparation for his trip to Castle Dracula, Jonathan Harker has "visited the British Museum, and made search among the books and maps in the library regarding Transylvania" (p. 9). It is similarly while researching about Eastern Europe at the British Museum that Bram Stoker found an account of the life of Voivode Vlad III of Wallachia, also known as Vlad the Impaler or simply Dracula, the latter cognomen identifying him as the son of Vlad Dracul, in *Account of the Principalities of Wallachia and Moldavia* (1820) by William Wilkinson. In Stoker's novel, it seems that Count Dracula has not inherited only his name from this historical figure, but also

[97] Stephen D. Arata, "The Occidental Tourist: *Dracula* and the Anxiety of Reverse Colonization" (1990), *Dracula*, Norton Critical Edition, p. 463.

his military past. Van Helsing argues that, in his lifetime,

> [the Count] must, indeed, have been that Voivode Dracula, who won his name against the Turk, over the great river on the very frontier of Turkey-land. If it be so, then was he no common man; for in that time, and for centuries after, he was spoken of as the cleverest and the most cunning, as well as the bravest of the sons of the "land beyond the forest. (p. 212)

Count Dracula himself confirms this hypothesis when he presents his lineage as "a conquering race" (p. 34), and when he speaks about himself as "a man who commanded nations, and intrigued for them, and fought for them, hundreds of years before they [the Victorian men who are chasing him] were born" (pp. 251-252). Dracula's assertion that he "fought for" other nations most probably refers to the fact that Vlad III of Wallachia spent his life fighting against the Ottoman invasion, effectively preventing the Ottoman Empire to extend to Europe. However, this feat did not earn him any gratitude from Western European countries, which supports the image of a Count Dracula coming back with a vengeance to punish the British for having made so little of his power. It is important to note that, throughout the nineteenth century, Britain strove to gain control over the Balkans, hence her participation in the Crimean War (1853-1856), and that she only recognised Romania—which was formed by the union of Wallachia and Moldavia—as an independent state with reluctance in the 1878 Treaty of Berlin. Thus, as Ken Gelder expresses, "In *Dracula*, the vampire returns colonisation to the colonisers"[98].

Count Dracula's plan of attack is made clear through the diary Jonathan Harker is keeping during his stay at Castle Dracula. The glimpse Harker gets of Dracula's research on Britain conducted in his extremely well-stocked library brings to mind the image of a military strategist:

> I began to look at the books around me. One was an atlas, which I found opened naturally at England, as if that map had been much used. On looking at it I found in certain places little rings marked, and on examining these I noticed that one was near London on the east side, manifestly where his new estate was situated; the other two were Exeter, Whitby, on the Yorkshire shore. (p. 29)

In particular, Harker's detailed description of the great variety of books contained in Dracula's library lays bare the latter's wish to know everything there is to know about Britain:

> In the library I found, to my great delight, a vast number of English books, whole shelves

[98] Gelder, *op. cit.*, p. 12.

> full of them, and bound volumes of magazines and newspapers. […] The books were of the most varied kind−history, geography, politics, political economy, botany, geology, law−all relating to England and English life and customs and manners. There were even such books of reference as the London Directory, the 'Red' and 'Blue' books, Whitaker's Almanack, the Army and Navy Lists, and−it somehow gladdened my heart to see it−the Law List. (p. 25)

This insistence on the Count's thorough study of Britain is carried on almost to the point of exaggeration as Harker finds him "lying on the sofa, reading, of all things in the world, an English Bradshaw's guide [i.e. a book of train timetables]" (p. 28). As a result, Dracula displays an almost uncanny knowledge of the precinct to which he is about to move, if we are to believe Harker:

> [Dracula] was interested in everything, and asked me a myriad questions about the place and its surroundings. He clearly had studied beforehand all he could get on the subject of the neighbourhood, for he evidently at the end knew very much more than I did. (p. 28)

But even more importantly, contrary to the image of the Count conveyed by Bela Lugosi's immediately identifiable Eastern European accent, Dracula's mastering of the English language in Stoker's novel is quite impressive, especially when compared to Van Helsing's utterances which are riddled with grammatical mistakes. Dracula's intention is thus clear: he wants to blend seamlessly into British society and destroy it from the inside. Incidentally, it should be noted that rare grammatical mistakes on the part of the Count are present in the very assertion of this intention ("I am content if I am like the rest, so no man stops if he see me, or pause in his speaking if he hear my words, to say, 'Ha, ha! a stranger!'" p. 26), as though Stoker already denied him success at this early stage of the novel. Nevertheless, the overwhelming presence of unsubtle anti-Semitism, as opposed to a more general type of xenophobia, in the novel can therefore be accounted for by the fact that Dracula embodies a threat mirroring that which the Jews stood for in nineteenth-century British eyes, i.e. the threat of a foreign Other who would be able to mingle inconspicuously with the Victorian crowd and corrupt British society from the inside. This xenophobic anxiety over the corruption of the British nation which was so significant in late Victorian Britain is represented in *Dracula* under the mask of contamination, a process inherent to the myth of vampirism.

b) Reverse Colonisation and Contamination in Dracula

In *Vampires, Burial, and Death*, Paul Barber argues that "the fear of the revenant was not entirely irrational: often people were afraid of contagion, without having defined its limits so closely as we have nowadays"[99]. In folklore, the myth of vampirism was thus associated with the phenomenon of epidemics from the start, hence its aptness to become a metaphor for contamination. Moreover, certain historical as well as biographical elements suggest that Bram Stoker had personal reasons for showing an interest in the idea of physical contagion. Nevertheless, it shall appear clearly that, although contagion occurs through bodily contact in *Dracula*, it is not so much physical disease as some sort of moral contamination from the Other which is feared in the novel. A study of contagion as represented in *Dracula* shall unveil the process by which the foreign Other embodied by the vampires is constructed as taboo, confirming in doing so Daniel Pick's assertion that "Stoker's novel, for all its mythological and folkloristic insistence, can be read in relation to a specific late-nineteenth-century discourse of degeneration."[100]

Researchers are unanimous on this point: the vampire hysteria which spread across Europe in the eighteenth century coincided with outbreaks of epidemics in Eastern Europe. The small villages which reported vampire attacks on a number of inhabitants at that time were in all probability affected by such epidemics. As Barber explains, "a person may become a vampire simply by being the first person to die of an epidemic, and the epidemic is interpreted as the effect of his depredations"[101]. Christopher Frayling also upholds this hypothesis and argues:

> the symptoms of the victim−pallor, listlessness, fever, nightmares−were thought to be those of the plague. The transmissions of the 'vampire's curse' from predator to victim, who then became predator in turn, was a graphic way of explaining the rapid spread of plague germs. Vampires and rats tended to be close companions in European folklore from an early stage, and there *was* an epidemic of the plague in East Prussia in 1710.[102]

In this regard, it is interesting to note that the folkloric belief that rats were the vampires' allies is preserved in *Dracula*, as these creatures are seen to "come to [the Count's] call" (p. 223) to help him destroy his Victorian enemies. Frayling also points out:

[99] Barber, *op. cit.*, p. 65.
[100] Pick, *op. cit.*, p. 174.
[101] Barber, *op. cit.*, p. 34.
[102] Frayling, *op. cit.*, p. 25.

> *Rabies*, in particular, was to become a later variation on this theme: there were well-documented epidemics of rabies in Hungary (1721-8), Saxony (1725-6) and Prussia (1785-9), and the analogies between the two types of infection–biting, followed by animal-style behaviour and an unquenchable thirst–were to be the subject of considerable research in the twentieth century.[103]

The animality of the vampires in *Dracula* indeed matches this description, although Stoker's portrayal of his vampires was inspired by accounts of folkloric beliefs, not by any knowledge of this particular disease. Nonetheless, biographical indications show that Stoker himself was acquainted with the phenomenon of epidemics and their consequences. Indeed, in his biography of the author, Harry Ludlam recounts:

> [his mother, Charlotte Stoker,] unburden[ed] to him a little of the horrors she had suffered as a child in Sligo, during the great cholera outbreak that claimed many thousands of victims in Ireland alone, and which provoked the most dreadful cruelties.[104]

Therefore, Bram Stoker became acquainted with what his mother imaginatively called the "bitter strange kiss"[105] at an early age. Moreover, his uncle, of whom he was a favourite, Dr. William Stoker, published a number of studies on infectious diseases, including a "Comparative View of Cholera Morbus" (1832) and a "Sketch of the Medical and Statistical History of Epidemic Fevers in Ireland, from 1798, and of Pestilential Diseases, since 1823" (1835). Even more importantly, the contemporary spread of venereal diseases may have been a source of inspiration for the representation of sexual vampirism in *Dracula*. According to Michael J. Dennison,

> It is impossible not to reflect on the way that the epidemic problem of venereal disease (at that time incurable) must have contributed to the potency of the myth of the vampire in the nineteenth century, particularly knowing that a quite significant number of writers of vampire literature suffered from the effects of syphilis infection, including Bram Stoker. It is believed that he was first infected with syphilis in the 1890s while writing *Dracula*.[106]

Although it has never been proved that Stoker himself was affected by syphilis as he was reported at the time to have died of exhaustion after suffering a series of stroke, the author of *Dracula* certainly knew of other writers who had died in the previous decades following the effects of this disease, among whom Charles Baudelaire in 1867, and Guy de Maupassant in

[103] *Ibid.*, p. 25.
[104] Harry Ludlam, *op. cit.*, p. 15.
[105] Charlotte Stoker, qtd. by Ludlam, *ibid.*, p. 28.
[106] Dennison, *op. cit.*, p. 106-107.

1893. All this should be borne in mind when considering the question of vampirism as an infection in *Dracula*.

Logically, it is the character of Professor Van Helsing who makes direct use of clinical terms to describe the phenomenon of vampirism, informing Mina that Dracula "have infect [her]" (p. 278) after the Count's assault on her. However, Mina's own words identify her as a person suffering from a contagious disease as well. Indeed, when she cries "Unclean, unclean!" (p. 248, and again p. 259), the editors point out that she is in fact quoting from the Bible: "And the leper in whom the plague is, his clothes shall be rent, and his head bare, and he shall put a covering upon his upper lip, and shall cry, Unclean, unclean" (Leviticus 13:45). This inter-textual reference is quite significant, as it suggests that the potential contamination in question is not so much physical as moral. Indeed, we are told in the Bible that the suspected leper should be brought not to a doctor, but to the priest (Leviticus 13:9), and that it is the priest who "shall pronounce him utterly unclean" (Leviticus 13:44). The leper is thus dealt with not as a sick person but as a sinner would be, being asked to confess his uncleanliness. Interestingly, in *Dracula*, Van Helsing also uses biblical language in order to depict the contamination process entailed by vampirism:

> When they become such, there comes with the change the curse of immortality; they cannot die, but must go on age after age adding new victims and multiplying the evils of the world; for all that die from the preying of the Un-Dead become themselves Un-Dead, and prey on their kind. And so the circle goes on ever widening, like as the ripples from a stone thrown in the water. (p. 190)

The professor especially insists on the moral heresy which is transmitted through the vampire's infection:

> But to fail here, is not mere life or death. It is that we become as him; that we henceforward become foul things of the night like him–without heart or conscience, preying on the bodies and the souls of those we love best. (p.209)

This idea that the act of vampirism transmits something above the mere physical realm brings us back to the notion of taboo. The physical aspect of taboo is undeniable, for Freud explains:

> Behind all these prohibitions there seems to be something in the nature of a theory that they are necessary because certain persons and things are charged with a dangerous power, which can be transferred through contact with them, almost like an infection.[107]

[107] Freud, *op. cit.*, p. 21.

However, in *Totem and Taboo*, Freud also argues:

> Anyone who has violated a taboo becomes taboo himself because he possesses the dangerous quality of tempting others to follow his example: why should *he* be allowed to do what is forbidden to others? Thus he is truly contagious in that every example encourages imitation, and for that reason he himself must be shunned.[108]

This notion that bad morals could actually be transmitted through any kind of contact with a taboo person is at the very basis of the process of rejection of the Other existing in late Victorian society. The Other, i.e. the person who did not conform with Victorian standards, was seen as jeopardising the *status quo* precisely because people could potentially be enticed to emulate him. Furthermore, the medical imagery surrounding the notion of contamination which epitomizes this aspect of Victorian society is totally in keeping with scientific racism and its concomitant discourse on degeneration which were widely accepted in late Victorian Britain. Contemporary xenophobic anxiety revolved on the assumption that what was then perceived as the British race would degenerate through prolonged contact with the foreign Other. In *Dracula*, this anxiety is chiefly embodied by the character of Renfield.

c) Renfield: The Figure of the "Ghoul"

Although he is not one of the main protagonists of the novel, being neither hero nor anti-hero, Renfield is a central figure in *Dracula*. In the first chapter of the present work, we dwelt upon his relationship with Count Dracula with regard to an allegorical reading of the novel. However, this relationship can also be construed as illustrating the late-nineteenth-century discourse of degeneration. Indeed, Renfield was most probably the inspiration for what Mark Rein·Hagen identified as the figure of the "Ghoul," an embodiment of the corruptibility of humanity. The character of Renfield shall help us introduce a major thread underlying the myth of vampirism, namely the idea that this myth is not so much important for what it tells about the figure of the vampire as such, but rather for what it discloses about humanity itself. In the present case, vampirism in *Dracula* unveils the perception late Victorians had of their own humanity in the context of the *fin-de-siècle*.

The "Ghoul" which the character of Renfield can be seen as representing is not the Ghoul from Arabian folklore but a type of creature identified in the role-playing game

[108] *Ibid.*, p. 32.

Vampire: The Masquerade mentioned earlier. These "Ghouls" are a "class of creature in between mortal and vampire," who may display preternatural endowments such as "superhuman strength and reflexes"[109]. If one is to believe Patrick Hennessey, one of Steward's colleagues who reports Renfield's behaviour to the doctor in his absence, Renfield demonstrates during one of his "fits" that he, too, possesses this attribute, fighting three men at once, "pulling [them] to and fro as if [they] were kittens" (p.142). Moreover, when explaining what the "Ghouls" are, the vampire narrator of the prelude to *Vampire: The Masquerade* asserts that it is "advantageous to create such servants, commanding their loyalty through the promise of eternal life"[110]. This assertion is strikingly resonant with the relationship Renfield entertains with Dracula, calling the latter "Master," even claiming to be his "Slave" (p. 98), serving him for instance at one point by opening the window to let him in the asylum, allowing him thereby to reach Mina, when Dracula promises to give him the lives of the rats he commands, "and many more and greater, through countless ages, if you will fall down and worship me!" (p. 245) The corrupted character displayed by Renfield in this "Ghoul"-like behaviour is a tremendously important element in this equation, for it draws attention to the corruptibility of humanity itself, including that of the British subject.

Indeed, what makes the relationship between Dracula and Renfield particularly horrible is that the latter is himself no monster but is truly human. Throughout the novel, the other characters, especially Dr. Seward, deny him his humanity. Like the vampires, he is compared to an animal when he "licks[s] up, *like a dog*, the blood which had fallen from [Seward's] wounded wrist" (p. 129, emphasis mine). Moreover, Steward uses all sorts of debasing, dehumanising terms when referring to his perceived madness, going so far as to call him "my own pet lunatic" (p. 206). However, a number of clues indicate that, despite his seeming insanity, Renfield has actually more in common with other men than the latter are ready to admit. Quincey Morris, one of Lucy's suitors, grants in his own playful, oxymoronic way that Renfield is "the sanest lunatic [he] ever saw" (p. 218). But Renfield reveals his humane side most perceptibly in what can be seen as his final act of redemption, when he tries to save Mina from Dracula. When he perceives that Dr. Seward and his male friends do not believe in his good intentions owing to his ostensible madness, he exclaims in despair: "Don't you know that I am sane and earnest now, that I am no lunatic in a mad fit, but a sane man fighting for his soul?" (p. 218) While this scene can be construed as a reassuring

[109] Rein·Hagen, *op. cit.*, p. 9.
[110] *Ibid.*, p. 9.

demonstration that innate human goodness shall always prevail, it also throws light upon the fact that, in spite of the dehumanising image of him which is given in the novel, Renfield was indeed a human being, albeit one representative of a degenerated form of humanity. For Gregory A. Waller,

> [in] the novel Renfield has been committed to Seward's asylum long before Dracula leaves Transylvania, and thus Stoker implies that England harbors insanity that can be manipulated by the vampire.[111]

Translated into the late-nineteenth-century discourse of degeneration, it meant that the Other was not only something utterly external to Victorian society, but that germs of it could also exist within it. The final question in *Dracula* is to know who would prevail, so much so that the novel can be read as an allegory of a struggle for power between two great forces, Britain and the Other. However, as the Renfield subplot suggests, the struggle represented in *Dracula* is not a mere binary struggle between Britain and the colonial Other as people who read *Dracula* as a simple adventure story imagine it to be. Indeed, the Victorian society depicted in the novel can be perceived as struggling against an integral part of itself.

3.3. A Struggle for Power

> *See thyself! Learn thy own vanity! Meet thyself face to face, and then in that moment thou shalt learn the fatal force of thy vanity. Learn it, know it, and repent ere the quicksand swallow thee!*
>
> Bram Stoker, “Crooken Sands”

a) Dracula and the Preservation of Racial Purity

Power struggle is an important aspect of the myth of vampirism. As Paul Barber expresses:

> Often enough, [the vampire] is shown to be engaged in an effort to do nothing less than take over the world, with the aid of an army of subordinate vampires. If one excepts his craving for blood, this power-lust is his sole passion and is seldom explained or analyzed.

[111] Gregory A. Waller, 'Tod Browning's *Dracula*' (1986), *Dracula*, Critical Norton Edition, p. 388.

> To be a vampire, it seems, is to be power-mad.[112]

The specificity of the power struggle which takes place in *Dracula* is that it does not merely consist in a simple "vampires versus humanity" pattern such as the one that can be found in Stephen King's *'Salem's Lot* (1975) for instance, but that it is in line with a specific racial paradigm. This struggle is in reality played out between what are presented as two distinct races. In this regard, in Stoker's novel, the trope of vampirism and its emphasis on what Roland Barthes calls "the fundamental racist object, Blood"[113] illustrates the late Victorian anxiety about the preservation of racial purity.

Far from being only a means of subsistence for the vampire, blood in *Dracula* is presented as evidence of the power of a race. When boasting of his impressive ancestry, Count Dracula always directs attention to his blood: "We Szekelys have a right to be proud, for in our veins flows the blood of many brave races who fought as the lion fights, for lordship" (p. 33); "What devil or what witch was ever so great as Attila, whose blood is in these veins?" (p. 34). Similarly, Van Helsing seems to attach much importance to blood, and to the idea that certain types of blood are allegedly "purer" than others, as the scene of Lucy's transfusions shows. Of Arthur Holmwood, the future Lord Godalming, he says that he is "so young and strong and of blood so pure" (p. 114), referring most certainly to Holmwood's aristocratic blood, whereas he dismisses directly the possibility of transfusing the maids' blood into Lucy's veins, explaining that he "fear[s] to trust those women" (p. 136). It would thus seem that, from Van Helsing's point of view, plebeian blood does not possess the regenerative power which aristocratic blood is endowed with. This view is of course totally in keeping with the hierarchical aspect of the class society characterising the Victorian era. The fact that aristocrats were then treated with great deference is rendered in *Dracula* in the reaction of a house agent upon hearing the name of Lord Godalming. Whereas he had previously refused to provide Harker with information on his client–who is none other than Count Dracula, arguing that "The affairs of their clients are absolutely safe in the hands of Mitchell, Sons, & Candy," he yields at once when Harker tells him that he came to see him on behalf of Lord Godalming, going so far as saying that "[it] will be a pleasure if we can so far deviate from our rules to give the required information to his Lordship" (pp. 233-234). In this regard, it is interesting to note that, in Stoker's working notes, Lucy was originally intended to be Seward's fiancée.[114]

[112] Barber, *op. cit.*, p. 83.
[113] Roland Barthes, *op. cit.*, p. 188.
[114] Frayling, *op. cit.*, p. 307.

The addition of the character of the aristocrat is a significant change, for it puts the finishing touch on the portrait of a harmonious modern British society, now modernising itself by accepting clerks and scientists though still leaving aside the lower working-class, thus prepared to fight off the attacks of the Other. In this sense, Christopher Frayling's following supposition appears to be quite relevant:

> It is also possible that in Bram Stoker's mind, hidden beneath the crusade against the empire of the nosferatu, lay some kind of cosmic racial conflict–between the representatives of modern Anglo-Saxon stock, plus an infusion of American, and the representative of the 1,400-year-old line of Attila the Hun.[115]

Moreover, to come back to the theme of blood in a more literal sense, it is significant that the scene in which Mina is forced to drink Dracula's blood is the one depicted in the most intense terms, and is therefore regarded by most readers as the most horrific scene in the novel. In fact, the series of dreadful events which occur in *Dracula* reaches its climax at this precise moment, the remainder of the novel consisting in the chase of Count Dracula back to his lair. When asked to recount what happened by her male friends, Mina cannot even bring herself to utter the fatal word:

> [...] he pulled open his shirt, and with his long sharp nails opened a vein in his breast. When the blood began to spurt out, he took my hands in one of his, holding them tight, and with the other seized my neck and pressed my mouth to the wound, so that I must either suffocate or swallow some of the–Oh my God! my God! What have I done? (p. 252)

The mixing of blood is thus presented as the most horrifying occurrence of all in the novel, an important detail which finds its origin in late-nineteenth-century xenophobic discourse.

In their introduction to *Dracula*, Nina Auerbach and David J. Skal argue that the novel illustrates a discourse on racial purity specific to late Victorian Britain:

> The British Empire's penetration into Africa and India–'the dark places of the earth,' as Conrad called them–accompanied a new penetration of England by aliens: the waves of immigrants, especially Jewish immigrants, that began in the 1880s. As the boundaries of England and Englishness became less clear-cut, racial purity became a new fetish. (p. XI)

Not only did this anxiety about racial purity sustain the discourse on degeneration as we have already seen, but it also contributed to the emergence of the taboo of miscegenation, i.e. of interracial sexual intercourse and marriage. The second chapter of the present work has

[115] *Ibid.*, p. 82-83.

already pointed out the sexual undertones of vampirism in *Dracula*, whose connection with the taboo of miscegenation is particularly obvious in the scene of Dracula's assault on Mina mentioned above. Indeed, a certain ambiguity stems from Mina's inability to utter the word "blood". If vampirism is construed as a metaphor for the sexual act, it is equally possible that the word Mina cannot utter is "semen." In this sense, what is presented as truly horrifying in this scene is the exchange of bodily fluids between the British female and the male Other. In allegorical terms, Dracula's assault on Mina stands for the rape of the British nation by the foreign Other. In the context of the Victorian debate on racial purity, it also represents the triumph of a heterogeneity dreaded by this normative society. As Ken Gelder expresses, "[diversity] means instability: it invites contestation: identities become confused: one can no longer tell 'who is who'"[116]. This confusion of identities is in fact a major aspect of *Dracula*. Indeed, eventually, one of the final impressions left on the reader's mind after a close reading of the novel is one of wonderment at the similarities between the behaviour of the vampires and their associates, and the attitude of their British rivals.

b) Mirroring the Otherness of Victorian Society

According to Ken Gelder, "it is possible to read the vampire as Self-image, a means of figuring socio-political-sexual excesses, which, although represented as foreign, actually lie much closer to home"[117]. This statement is particularly relevant to Stoker's novel, for Count Dracula and his associates clearly function as mirror images not only of the Victorian characters which confront them in the novel, but also of the historical Victorian society which the latter characters represent. Moreover, in *Dracula*, when the figure of the vampire does not constitute a reflection of what Victorians would not admit to be, it highlights the weaknesses of Victorian society by opposing them to its own powers of adaptation. Analysing Count Dracula as the double of Victorian society shall bring us back to the notion of uncanny alluded to in the first chapter of the present work, and its importance to understand the praises the novel received when it was first published in late Victorian Britain. Eventually, although the vampire is seemingly defeated at the end of *Dracula*, it shall appear that the novel in fact epitomizes the decline of the Victorian golden age.

[116] Gelder, *op. cit.*, p. 12.
[117] *Ibid.*, p. 43.

In spite of its pervading xenophobic discourse which points to the foreign Other as the source of all evil, Bram Stoker's *Dracula* inadvertently brings to light the repressed Other which lies within Victorian society itself. In his article "*Dracula*: The Unseen Face in the Mirror," Carol A. Senf argues quite convincingly that the Victorian characters' fight against the vampire only betrays their affinity to the creature. Commenting on the violent scene of vampire Lucy's staking in particular, Senf remarks that "[behavior] generally attributed to the vampire–the habit of attacking a sleeping victim, violence, and irrational behavior–is revealed to be the behavior of the civilized Englishman also"[118]. Many other occurrences invite a comparison between Count Dracula and his enemies. First, while we have seen that the novel insists on the vampire's condition of being damned, Jonathan Harker expresses his willingness to become damned himself if it is what it takes to avenge his wife Mina: "I care for nothing now […] except to wipe out this brute from the face of creation. I would sell my soul to do it!" (p. 265) This Faustian assertion makes Harker more blameworthy than vampires like Lucy, or even presumably the three vampire women living in Castle Dracula, for they did not choose their condition, whereas Harker is prepared to trade his soul as part of a bargain. Furthermore, not only moral but also financial corruptibility is shown to be an attribute of British men in the novel. In this regard, it is quite ironic to read Harker's sarcastic remark: "Thank God! [Dracula's] is the country where bribery can do anything, and we are well supplied with money" (p. 290), for Harker himself has just related a few pages before how he has bribed British maritime workers to get information about Count Dracula's disposal of his boxes of earth in London. Finally, Britain's inhumane behaviour towards the countries she wished to colonise is reflected in Dracula's attempt at reverse colonisation. Stephen D. Arata notes that Dracula's "invasion of London in order to 'batten on the helpless' natives there mirrors British imperial activities abroad"[119] while Christopher Frayling aptly remarks that "his behaviour represents a reverse mirror-image of what the American, Dutch and English 'initiates' have in common"[120]. Therefore, all these flaws which are presented as counter to Victorian standards and projected unto the foreign Other are attributes of Victorian society itself.

However, Count Dracula does not only offer a reverse image of nineteenth-century Britain, but he also emphasizes her weaknesses by opposing them to his own strength. This is

[118] Senf, *op. cit.*, p. 427.
[119] Arata, *op. cit.*, p. 469.
[120] Frayling, *op. cit.*, p. 82.

particularly obvious in Dracula's flawless organisation when he moves to England but also when he beats a hasty retreat, as opposed to the British lack of coordination in the chase after the Count's boxes of earth. In their preface to the novel, Nina Auerbach and David J. Skal remark:

> Dracula is an adaptable monster. […] When we meet the vampire, he has never left his native Transylvania, but his English is more elegant and lucid than that of the Englishmen he accosts, many of whom are tangled in the thickets of their own dialect. (p. IX)

As a consequence, while Dracula has no difficulty in organising the handling of his boxes in diverse European cities and towns, Jonathan Harker has a hard time trying to communicate with his fellow-countrymen within his own country. On several occasions, Harker faces difficulties when he is given directions to help him find the person who could inform him. First, he wastes a lot of time trying to locate a place which does not exist, explaining afterwards: “Mr Smollet's spelling misled me, as I asked for Poter's Court instead of Potter's Court” (p.230). Then, he almost misses the man in question, asking for the “depite” and receiving the answer that “[there] ain't such a person 'ere; I never 'eard of 'im in all my bloomin' days” (p. 230). Fortunately, Harker asks the man he is addressing who he is, and the latter replies that he is “the depity,” leaving the young solicitor to conclude that “phonetic spelling had again misled [him]” (p. 231). Although, *prima facie*, this scene seems trivial enough, it suggests that Britain should solve internal issues, such as relations between her different social classes, before tackling the problem of external enemies. After all, it is certainly not a sign of a strong society that some fellow-countrymen should be seen by the Victorian protagonists as less comprehensible, thus more Other, than the foreign Other itself.

It is now clear that the foreign Other may be construed as a red herring which, in reality, diverts the attention from what is happening at home, within Victorian Britain itself, which brings us back to the Freudian notion of uncanny. Although *Dracula* did not immediately enjoy the tremendous success it has now when it was first published in 1897, it did receive a number of laudatory reviews. For instance, the *Daily Mail* review compares Stoker's novel to such horror classics as Radcliffe's *Mysteries of Udolpho* (1794), Mary Shelley's *Frankenstein* (1818), Emily Brontë's *Wuthering Heights* (1850), Poe's “Fall of the House of Usher” (1839) and Sabine Baring-Gould's “Marjery of Quether” (1892), asserting that *Dracula* is “even more appalling in its gloomy fascination than any of these”[121]. Why the

[121] Rev. of *Dracula*, *The Daily Mail* (June 1, 1897), *Dracula*, Norton Critical Edition, p. 363.

novel should have been so thrilling to Stoker's contemporaries is an interesting question, and I believe that the answer lies in part in its epitomizing what Freud would later define as the uncanny. We have already said that Freud describes the uncanny as "that class of the frightening which leads back to what is known of old and long familiar"[122]. The psychoanalyst explains further:

> This uncanny is in reality nothing new or alien, but something which is familiar and old-established in the mind and which has become alienated from it only through the process of repression.[123]

As we have seen throughout this work, Victorian society was extremely normative, creating numerous taboos as part of the "process of repression" pointed out by Freud. What may have made *Dracula* particularly frightening to Stoker's contemporaries, although they do not seem to have perceived it consciously, is a sense that the novel eventually reveal that the Other is not necessarily something foreign, but that the taboos imposed on them by their society made the repressed part of their inner selves Other as well. In this sense, the vampires in *Dracula* impersonate this uncanny, embodying as they do the taboos imposed by Victorian society on its citizens. They are presented as Other, but are in reality doubles of the Victorians themselves. The notion of double and its concomitant figure of the *doppelgänger* which was recurrent in nineteenth-century Gothic literature manifestly fascinated Stoker, for he would devote several of his short stories to this theme. One can cite for instance "Crooken Sands" (1894), in which Mr Arthur Fernlee Markam is confronted to his own double, or the horrifying tale "The Dualists: Or, the Death-Doom of the Double-Born" (1887), in which two friends set to destroy any two identical objects they get their hands on by making them collide with each other. The idea that the vampires in fact function as the evil doubles of the Victorians is thus quite conceivable. Indeed the vampires in *Dracula* match perfectly Mladen Dolar's definition of the double "as a figure of *jouissance* [...] somebody who enjoys at the subject's expense; he commits acts that one wouldn't dare to commit, he indulges in one's repressed desires"[124]. Thus, through this play of mirrors, the novel ultimately betrays the fact that Victorian society itself carries something Other, and that, no matter how many taboos it can create, a society, as a group of human beings, cannot protect itself from its own human weaknesses.

[122] Freud, *op. cit.*, p. 220.
[123] *Ibid.*, p. 241.
[124] Mladen Dolar, "'I Shall Be with You on Your Wedding Night': Lacan and the Uncanny," *October* 58 (Autumn, 1991) <http://www.jstor.org/stable/778795> Accessed December, 16, 2009, p. 13.

The process of rejection of the Other was a desperate attempt on the part of Victorian society to preserve a homogeneity which was seen as the basis of any stable society. Bram Stoker's *Dracula* demonstrates through its xenophobic discourse that the foreign immigrant was typically used as a scapegoat for the perceived decadent state of late Victorian society. Count Dracula, the famous foreign immigrant of the novel, himself owes much to the mythological figures of rejection of Cain and the Wandering Jew. The assimilation of Dracula with the Jewish immigrant is typical of nineteenth-century British literature which made the figure of the Jew the archetypal impersonation of the Other, and reflects the Victorian fear of the immigrant blending seamlessly into British society and carrying out in effect a process of reverse colonisation. This anxiety was sustained by late nineteenth-century scientific racism which blamed the process of degeneration that allegedly affected Victorian society on some sort of contamination from foreigners. The endemic nature of vampirism, but also the character of Renfield as the contaminated, degenerate individual, make *Dracula* an obvious literary embodiment of this anxiety. However, this fear of contamination highlights the perceived vulnerability of British subjects, and the novel can also be read as an allegorical struggle for power between what are presented as two distinct races. In this sense, the theme of blood inherent to vampirism is of tremendous importance, as racial purity is regarded on the British side as a *sine qua non* of hegemony. Although Count Dracula is seemingly defeated by the end of the novel, which should, in theory, leave the Victorian camp as uncontested leader, the power struggle between the two camps leaves the representatives of Victorian society more weakened than ever. Indeed, the fight against the vampire induces them to inadvertently display their affinities with the vampire Other, betraying the heterogeneous nature of their own humanity.

Conclusion

For Edward Said, the novel is "a concretely historical narrative shaped by the real history of real nations."[125] *Dracula* is indeed shaped by the distinct atmosphere of late Victorian Britain. This atmosphere, which is reproduced in the novel with the aid of literary devices, was one of fear: fear stemming from the shattering of spiritual and social certainties, but also fear produced by the growing exposure and denunciation of the taboos which Victorian society was based on. In its own way, Bram Stoker's *Dracula* constitutes a novel in which these taboos find their expression. However, as the taboo Others of Victorian society were gradually finding a voice, through feminist movements, or through nascent nationalist movements in certain colonies such as the Home Rule movement in Ireland, *Dracula* is more representative of the other side of the coin, giving vent to the anxiety of these Victorians who witnessed the crumbling of their society's foundations. The representation of the sexual woman, the homosexual, and the foreign Other come to take his revenge as powerful monsters to be fought eventually reveals the state of decay in which the Victorian society which inspired this novel found itself by showing how these perceived monsters were clearly embedded within this society. The final mirror image of the Victorians invoked in the novel through the figures of the vampires unveils the process by which the uncovering of the heterogeneity of an age which had constructed itself on homogeneity brought this era to an end. However, the very form of *Dracula* as a proto-modernist novel, as well as the birth of little Quincey Harker at the end of the narrative, suggest that this representation of Victorian society's struggle against itself does not only testify to the end of an era, but that it also foreshadows a new modern era coming into being from the subversion of Victorian taboos. Nonetheless, the fact that myth and previous fictional works are conjured up alongside Victorian historical events in order to construct vampires as embodiments of Victorian taboos throws light upon the struggle of a society against what it classifies as Other as an a-temporal process. For David Glover,

> [however] dated Stoker's book may appear, the undying appeal of his nosferatu depends upon a confusion of temporalities in which ancient folktales, medieval legends, and modern obsessions may all be instantaneously present, coalescing with horrifying effect.[126]

[125] Edward W. Said, *Culture and Imperialism* (1993), London, Vintage, 1994, p. 92.
[126] Glover, *op. cit.*, p. 139.

In other words, each society, whether ancient or modern, constructs its own monsters, and endows them with their own meanings by using the mythology and fictional works which have been handed down to it by previous generations in connection with contemporary elements. Today, we still have our vampires, werewolves and other zombies in contemporary literature, but also in this modern means of expression which is cinema. Nevertheless, they do not impart the meaning that which Count Dracula and his three female companions have conveyed to generations of readers until the present day. Yesterday, the vampire stood for the unspeakable Other constructed by a normative Victorian society, today it alternatively symbolizes the craving for eternal youth created by a society of the spectacle based on appearances, the changing condition of humanity in the era of global zombie capitalism, or the sense that, although we now live in a world of advanced technology, there are still ancient questions we find it difficult to answer. The significant legacy which Bram Stoker's *Dracula* left to us, which may account for its being cited as a major influence by many contemporary horror writers but also for its still appealing to a large readership, is its having shown how the mythological and literary figure of the vampire could be used not merely as good material for a horror story, but also and more importantly to represent, and thereby to try to make sense of, the anxieties of one's age.

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Myth, Fiction, and Reality in Bram Stoker's Dracula*: The Embodiment of Victorian Taboos* a pour objet de montrer que les nombreuses sources d'inspiration de Bram Stoker, qu'elles proviennent de la mythologie, de fictions ou d'évènements historiques, participent à la représentation des tabous victoriens qu'offre le roman. Après avoir démontré que l'atmosphère particulière de l'Angleterre de la fin du XIXe siècle, qui se caractérisait par la peur et l'incertude, est retranscrite dans le roman grâce à divers procédés, le présent ouvrage se concentre sur les deux domaines qui regroupent les tabous victoriens les plus importants, à savoir la sexualité et l'étrangeté. Dans *Dracula*, la figure du vampire symbolise l'Autre qui, en brisant ces tabous fondamentaux, devient lui-même tabou aux yeux de la société victorienne. Cependant, le roman finit par révéler qu'en réalité, cet Autre qui est rejeté par les Victoriens fait aussi partie d'eux-mêmes. Ainsi, dans *Dracula*, la figure mythologique et littéraire du vampire reflète les angoisses de l'époque qui a vu naître ce roman.

Mots clés : mythe, fiction, réalité, taboo, peur, sexualité, étrangeté, l'Autre, le vampire.

Myth, Fiction, and Reality in Bram Stoker's Dracula*: The Embodiment of Victorian Taboos* proposes to show how Stoker's numerous sources of inspiration from mythology, previous fictional works and historical events contribute to the novel's representation of Victorian taboos. After demonstrating that the particular atmosphere of *fin-de-siècle* Britain characterised by intense feelings of fear and uncertainty is translated in the novel through various devices, the present work concentrates on the two areas encompassing the most important Victorian taboos, namely sexuality and strangeness. In *Dracula*, the figure of the vampire stands for the Other who breaks these fundamental taboos and thus becomes itself taboo in the eyes of Victorian society. However, the novel eventually reveals that this Other rejected by the Victorians is in fact part of themselves. In *Dracula*, the mythological and fictional figure of the vampire thus reflects the anxieties of the era in which the novel was written.

Key words: myth, fiction, reality, taboo, fear, sexuality, strangeness, the Other, the vampire.